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THE
D E N I A L;
OR, THE
HAPPY RETREAT.
A NOVEL.
VOL. II.

THE
DINIA
OR THE
HAPPY RETREAT.
A NOVEL.

BY THE REV. JAMES THOMSON.

IN THREE VOLUMES.



The publisher of this volume is
and the printer is the Rev. James Thomson.
It is a great and beautiful volume, and
contains a wealth of information.
The price is 10s. 6d. per volume.
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T H E
D E N I A L.

L E T T E R XXII.

FROM MR. BENFIELD TO THE HON. MR.
WILTON.

S I R,

BY the purport of your last letters, the state of your mind is very perceptible. From the first mention of the Lady, I suspected your partiality. My suspicions are now confirmed. Nevertheless, however amiable the Lady, whatever her fortune and expectations in life may be, I am apt to conclude, your father's acquiescence will never be obtained. He is so refractory, so jealous of his authority, and so dictatorial in his commands, that your most worthy mother is absolutely forbid to mention your name in his presence; and my dear Antonet is

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con-

confined a prisoner, without one individual of the family daring to become an intercessor for her release. How this unhappy occurrence will terminate, is altogether impossible to conjecture; whether to the satisfaction of one or more of the individuals most immediately concerned, or to the final disgrace of the primitive aggressor, who, though a parent, cannot rationally acquit himself from every degree of culpability, at the impartial tribunal of deliberative justice. "This present uncertainty is tedious and irksome to every party, destructive of unanimity, and subversive of confidence. What can be the cause, of such a wide difference between the decisions of youth and age, in the important article of marriage? Both are supposed to be endowed with a certain degree of ratiocination sufficient to direct them through every other intricacy of life; but in this, there is too often a jarring of opinions, which frequently terminates in confirmed disgust and a lasting separation. Fatal difference!

That

That a parent and a child, an union whose interests ought to be inseparable, should be disunited and alienated from one another, through the baneful influence of interest or ambition, is really pitiable. But so it has happened, and so it will always happen, to the latest period of time, where connections are to be formed, families supported, and poverty screened, by the intriguing views of avarice, the fastidious pretensions of pride, and the humiliating cringes of abject servility.

In the midst of these moral, or, as some will term them, unduteous observations, I had almost forgot the subject I meant to communicate. A few days ago, I had the pleasure of a visit from a Mr. Bowman, a Serjeant at Law in one of the Inns of Court. We were schoolfellows, and through life a strict intimacy, formed on the broad basis of mutual reciprocation, has invariably subsisted between us. You have frequently heard me mention him in terms of the highest approbation, for intellectual acquisitions and unsullied integrity. He has

been a son of Adversity, and arrived at his present eminence in his profession by unwearied diligence and indefatigable perseverance. He has often told me in the modest exultation of an honest heart, that from a consciousness of a want of opulent connections and a certain independence to enable him to push forward through the busy labyrinths of the law, he for years after his inauguration saw nothing but penury, gaunt and perilous, stare him in the face; but that, determined to proceed, his application was vigorous, his progress rapid; and that he soon had the triumphant satisfaction to behold many competitors, who had begun their career with potent friends and connections as well as independence, lagging far behind in the arduous pursuit.

With this companion of my early years I expected to have passed a few happy days. My expectation was vain, my disappointment mortifying, since both you and I were included and involved in the eventful series of his information. I recollect an expression in one of your letters, where

where you say, you wished your fears relative to this journey to London, were not ominous. You seem to have anticipated the artful designs of an enraged father;—enraged beyond the bounds of common decency—enraged at his children for daring to think, to act, and exert those powers which the Creator of Man hath endowed them with. He is now attempting to entail infamy, shame, and poverty on his offspring, merely because the world pronounces them to be wiser and more judicious than himself.

Indeed, I am not blessed with your philosophic turn of mind, Wilton. When provoked and ill treated, I must retaliate. When insulted and irritated, even by the father of my friend and mistress, I cannot shield myself with that passive tameness of stoical apathy so as to bear it with patience, and to sit down calmly under the pressure of apparent ignominy. No; my resolution recoils at the attack, my patience disdains the unjustness of the

reproach, and I feel myself uneasy under the injurious insinuations of a man I once esteemed, because the parent of my dear Antonet.

You will say 'I am angry; but what is the cause? O Wilton, pardon my warmth! I am hurried on by an indulgence of an unjustifiable passion, by a perturbation of spirits resulting from an act of inveterate malice, wherein not only your present happiness but your temporal welfare is absolutely involved.

These digressive ebullitions, these emanations of an ill-governed fury, you will please to peruse with an eye of candour. You know I am apt to take fire at ill-treatment, and I have more than once received it from your father.

After the usual congratulations of absent friends, Mr. Bowman asked me, with a very serious look, and a tone of the profoundest gravity, if I were acquainted with the Earl of Wilton? Having answered him in the affirmative, he told me,
he

he had had a visit, at his chambers, from the Earl upon very important business, for the prosecution and completion of which he had undertaken this journey.

Being not only surprized but alarmed at this intelligence, I said, with much earnestness, "Pray, Mr. Bowman, may I presume, upon the basis of a long friendship, to enquire the nature of this very important business?" He very gravely replied, "Why do you enquire with so much earnestness? If you will answer my interrogatory ingenuously, I may probably satisfy you in your's." I then informed him, without the least reserve, of my long acquaintance with the family, of my intimate connection with your sister, and of my expectation to be one day united with it by the most tender of all alliances. He replied, with a smile, "All this, Mr. Benfield, I am already perfectly acquainted with."—I looked eagerly on him—he saw my surprize and continued, "I perceive your surprize at what I have

“said, and must inform you, that I am
“come purposely from London to frus-
“trate all your expectations of such an
“alliance.”—I arose from my chair in
much emotion—while he retained the same
gravity of countenance—and then adjusting
his wig with both his hands, and throw-
ing himself carelessly back in his chair,
seemed to enjoy my anxiety.

After I had paced a few times across
the floor, he said, “Mr. Benfield!”—I
looked at him, and observed his muscles
had relaxed a little, and that some small de-
gree of risibility was visible upon his coun-
tenance. He continued, “I perceive your
“emotion, and wish not to add to your
“solicitude, but rather to alleviate
“it, if my interference could operate
“with so benignant an influence. To
“answer your question, I inform you,
“as a confidential friend, in whose bo-
“som I have often reposed my secrets
“without the least dread of an improper
“discovery, that Lord Wilton waited
“upon

“ upon me to consult me relative to the
“ possibility of cutting off the entail of his
“ estate, in order to disinherit his son,
“ whom he termed the most disobedient
“ of children, and that he might be
“ thereby impowered to reward his
“ daughters in proportion to their duty.
“ When I expressed my doubts of the possi-
“ bility of perfecting such a deed without
“ the voluntary consent of his son, as heir
“ at law, he desired I would wait upon him
“ at Wilton-Park, to examine the instru-
“ ments by which the tenure is perpetuated;
“ and said moreover, that if his son would
“ not, for a certain pecuniary considera-
“ tion, give an immediate acquiescence,
“ he should live and die under the horrid
“ imprecation of a justly-incensed parent.”

Mr. Bowman added, that when he expo-
stulated gently with him on the returning
affection of a parent, and the renewal of
duty in a child, he lost all temper, and re-
plied, “ I came here, Sir, for advice in a
“ legal question, not to be dictated to up-
“ on the duty of a father. I have al-

“ ready apprized you of the attachment
“ of my eldest daughter, which if she
“ continue, the same paternal denunciation
“ shall be her marriage portion. I scorn
“ to connive at the disobedience of
“ my children. If they do not love
“ me, I am determined to make them
“ fear me.” He then asked Mr. Bowman
to take a journey to Wilton-Park, on
the business proposed, and added, that he
should be amply compensated for his
trouble. Mr. Bowman consented, and
Lord Wilton immediately took his leave.

After my friend Bowman had given me
this intelligence, and delivered his opinion
on the impracticability of legally execut-
ing what Lord Wilton so urgently desired,
the residue of our conversation became too
general to be interesting to you. I then ex-
acted a promise from him, that he would
inform me of every measure taken in the
prosecution of this unnatural undertaking ;
having first convinced him of the prop-
riety of such a conduct, from the cruelty
of a father attempting, under the hallowed
sanction

sanction of a legal decision, to deprive his children of their patrimonial inheritance. He cheerfully acquiesced with my arguments, and soon after departed for Wilton-Park.

Have I not sufficient reason to be angry, and to animadvert with some severity on the behaviour of a father who can thus deliberately execute an action by which he wishes to involve his offspring in inevitable ruin?

Man, thou sovereign, thou tyrant of the creation ! why this perversion of those faculties which the benevolent Creator of the universe hath bestowed upon thee to distinguish and exalt thee so superlatively above all thy fellows of the dust ? Go to the forest, to the savage herd, and learn affection ; learn that tenderness to which the callousness of thy disposition is too often a stranger ! Go—But what comes here ? A letter !—I know the writing, and pant for the contents ; which when I have perused, you shall likewise participate of the pleasure or solicitude which they convey.

I am, &c.

LETTER XXIII.

FROM THE HON. MISS WILTON TO
MR. BENFIELD.

SIR,

I AM yet under imprisonment, without one single glimpse of hope of a speedy liberation. But not being prohibited the use of pen, ink, and paper, I shall employ some of my vacant hours in acquainting you with every material circumstance that happens in our distracted family, and of which I am faithfully apprized by the affectionate assiduity of my tender parent, and the unalienable regard of my sympathizing sister. My honoured mother!—I see her affliction; her sorrow is conspicuous through all her attempts to conceal it; many a heavy sigh escapes from her heaving bosom, swelled with the deepest grief.

—Absorbed

—Absorbed in the gloom of anxiety, she sighs out her solitudes, whilst by a sudden recollection she endeavours in vain to recall them. Her wanted hilarity is fled, her former cheerfulness is dwindled into a forced smile, and her health is visibly on the decline.

This melancholy change is apparent to all the family:—every servant is conscious of it; and they recite their fears to each other, with tears in their eyes, on the approaching fate of the best of mistresses; whilst my father, blinded by his prejudices, or voluntarily warped by his inflexibility, treats her with the same superciliousness which hath so conspicuously marked his character through life. Hateful task! but justice compels me thus to delineate the deportment of my parent, whom Religion and Nature teach me to obey. Fear is a slavish principle, the companion of guilt, and is too frequently exacted by the votaries of overbearing

bearing authority. It may command servility, but can never meet with the smallest esteem.

As soon as my father arrived from London, my mother met him at the door with the smile of joy, and gave him a welcome home. He suddenly thanked her, and hastily passed her. Surprized at the coolness of this reception, she followed him after a little interval into the parlour: the ensuing scene you know already. After my recovery she returned, and a solemn silence ensued. To manifest his indifference, my father calmly hummed a tune, and when kindly asked after his health since his departure, he never so much as vouchsafed a look at the dear enquirer, but carelessly continued his tune. Though wrung to the soul with his contemptuous behaviour, she affected not to observe it, but said with a tone of complacency, "My Lord, had I been acquainted with your intention of visiting the metropolis at this season, I should
"have

“ have taken the liberty to trouble you
“ with the management of some little bu-
“ siness I had to transact there.” He an-
swered, “ It was, my Lady, purely to
“ avoid such a trouble that I did not
“ deem it requisite to give you any pre-
“ vious notice of my departure.” She
replied, “ It would not, my Lord, have
“ been much, and you might have com-
“ pleted it in the space of a few minutes.
“ I ever thought it my duty to inform
“ you of the most insignificant of my
“ movements, in order either to receive
“ your orders, or to obey your inhibi-
“ tions.” He retorted, “ The duty which
“ you boast of, you have with a vengeance
“ inculcated into your children, who,
“ with an effrontery unparalleled, have
“ opposed themselves to my determina-
“ tions, which you and they ought to
“ have acceded to with readiness and
“ submission. Henceforth, let not the
“ word *duty* be prostituted by such a ser-
“ vile acceptance as confers disgrace upon
“ the

“the term, and duplicity upon those who
“ artfully pretend to screen their machi-
“ nations under the speciousness of such a
“ veil.” “ I hope, replied my mother,
“ you do not wish to include me under
“ the odium of this general censure?” He
returned, “ I include every one who hath
“ ever had the audacity even to expostu-
“ late with the justice or propriety of my
“ opinions. I expected they should have
“ been final and conclusive ; but you, by
“ illicit practices and wilful connivance,
“ have instilled the cordial of self-appro-
“ bation, and cherished the seeds of dis-
“ obedience with so much success, that my
“ whole offspring have actually risen into
“ an unnatural rebellion against me. But
“ I will be revenged; I will have an ample
“ and a full revenge upon the degenerate
“ ingrates ! who, spurning my advice,
“ and rejecting my counsel, have plunged
“ themselves into such an unfathomable
“ abyss as all your fine-spun artifice shall
“ never be able to extricate them from.”

Here

Here being violently agitated, and his utterance indistinct through his vehemence, he arose from his chair and abruptly left the room.

My dear mother came immediately to me :—her eyes were swimming in tears—the paleness of her looks, the trembling of her whole frame, startled, alarmed and terrified me. She sat down by me, and, wiping away her tears, said, “ O An-
“ tonet, I am truly unhappy, and have
“ lived to see those days wherein I have
“ no pleasure. My marriage was unpro-
“ pitious, yet I complied with the injunc-
“ tions of my parents, vainly hoping
“ to taste of that felicity which ought to
“ be reciprocal in the marriage state, and
“ which is the result of a congeniality of
“ disposition, softened and endeared by a
“ mutual interchange of social delights and
“ unabating affection. I vainly expected
“ that my implicit acquiescence with
“ your father’s humours, my ready com-
“ pliance with all his demands, would, in
“ time,

“time, have so far attracted his attention,
“as to have screened me from insult and
“the humiliating silence of disdain. I
“acted from a conviction that I was
“right, and I have been fatally disap-
“pointed. O Antonet! it was my morn-
“ing and my evening prayer to the All-
“wise Disposer of Events, that his mercy
“might be so far extended to me, that I
“might live to see my Henry, my An-
“tonet, and my Sophia, finally settled in
“life, and then I could close my eyes in
“peace, resign my soul into the hands of
“her Creator, and leave my grey hairs
“to be silently laid in the dust by you,
“my beloved children.” Here she paused—
—a fresh stream of tears gushed from her
eyes, whilst I gently kissed them from her
pallid cheek, and fruitlessly attempted to
alleviate her sorrow.

Sophy entered, and, seeing her venerable parent overwhelmed in grief, ran to her, and clasping her arms around her neck, kindly enquired into the cause of her sorrow.

forrow. "Alas! my children, may Heaven bless you for your affection, when I am mouldering in the grave, whither I am hastening very fast. Let religion be your practice, and virtue your guide through life; then, if you err, you are the less culpable; it is an error of ignorance. Remember the instructions of a parent, who ever loved you, and died with your names engraven on her heart. —That heart, when it shall cease to beat, will end a life of misery. My children! "O my Henry!"—Her eyes closed—her tongue faltered, and her swooping head sunk upon my bosom.

In this trying scene of distress we had the presence of mind to carry and lay her gently upon the bed, and then, as the only alleviation, sat down, one on each side of her, to weep away our sorrows.

In this mournful silence, when the finest feelings of the soul were tremblingly alive to the softest touch of woe, the soothing glance of grief darted across the
bed,

bed, and added to the mutual sympathy of our soft suffusion. Thus silent and stupified, we sat weeping over the apparently lifeless body of our beloved parent, watching with the keenest pang of corroding anxiety for the return of that life and animation which would, with one word, add wings to our sorrow, and substitute the smile of joy in the place of the deepest shade of grief.—The door opened, and George entered, with a summons for his Lady to attend upon his Lord in the parlour.—I looked at him—my tears flowed afresh—I pointed to my dear mother—he stepped to the bedside—he looked and wept. She sighed—then opened her eyes, and after a little pause said, “Alas! where am I?” How sweet, how grateful was the sound of her voice! Our fears were instantly dispelled, and hope returned with redoubled vigour. I replied with eagerness, “My dear mother is in her daughter’s chamber.” “God be praised,” said she, “for all his mercies, and shed his blessings upon
“you,

“you, my children, for all your kindness!” I then requested George to go and acquaint his master that his Lady was rather indisposed, and had retired to take a little rest.

He presently returned, and gave me two letters, which he said his Lord had sent for the perusal of his Lady, and desired they might be returned with all imaginable dispatch. I desired George to acquaint my father that the letters should be sent down stairs as soon as my mother had perused them. On inspection, I perceived that Sir George Silvertop, with a benevolence characteristic of him, being grieved for the distress of our family, occasioned by the projected union with his daughter, had written a consolatory letter to my father, endeavouring to appease him and palliate the supposititious disobedience of his son. My father's answer was the other letter. I thought it no literary plagiarism to transcribe them, and prevailed upon my sister to assist me in the venial trespass.

trespass. I send you the pilfered copies enclosed, in full assurance of your transmitting them to my much-injured brother, whose cause Sir George pleads with an honest energy. You will perceive by the answer what reception his good intentions met with;—spurned and derided for those admonitory counsels which the wisest of the sons of men might adopt, without the least impeachment of the soundness of their intellects.

My father has, for some days, been closely shut up in his study with a strange gentleman; and, from the secrecy observed, there is certainly some business of importance upon the tapis, but what it is not one of the family can surmise; tho' we all hope it is no matrimonial engagement with any branch of the family; in confidence of which I subscribe myself

Your's, &c.

ANTONET WILTON.

P. S.

P. S. My maid will convey this secretly to Wilton-Wood, where Jane Moore, my old nurse, resides. She is engaged in our interest, and your future correspondence will be safely received by that channel, without any suspicion.

LETTER

LETTER XXIV.

FROM SIR GEORGE SILVERTOP TO THE
EARL OF WILTON.

MY LORD,

WHEN you first proposed an union betwixt our families, I received the proposal with a cheerful satisfaction, considering it was unexceptionable, advantageous, and honourable. On this view, I looked forward with anxiety for the completion of a marriage, which I vainly deemed would add a wreath of happiness to my old age. I foolishly anticipated my pleasure resulting from it, and had already in idea seen my little grand-children playing, prattling, and lisping around my knees. This visionary scene of pleasure is already vanished, and I am afraid my evening sun will set in the thickest gloom of misery. The morning of my days has
been

been embittered by an unfortunate incident, which destroyed my happiness, and left me a martyr to the stings of inveterate woe. The dear image of what I lost is written in indelible characters upon the tablet of my heart, and only shall be erased when it shall cease to beat. Yet why should I grieve, when I reflect, that man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward. This is the opinion of one of the wisest of the sons of Adam, and whose ample experience in life had taught him the vanity of the wish that sighs for unallayed happiness. There is only one path by which we can attain this wish, and that is, by a constant perseverance in and unceasing attachment to religion and virtue. The latter is the invariable result of the former; for where true religion exists, there is found a life of virtue, and frequently a life of peace; a happiness we ought eagerly to grasp at, but which we too frequently despise, as too easily attainable. Here is an asylum for the afflicted,

flicted, and a sure refuge for the miserable.

I write from experience; affliction made me religious; religion brought me peace.

When I was informed of your son's departure from Wilton-Park, I took the liberty of waiting upon you, from an ardent wish and pure motive of attempting a reconciliation, by which an only and deserving son might be restored to his worthy family. Though at that time my attempt did not meet with success, I have not yet laid aside all hope of being enabled to restore tranquillity to a family, from whom I have been somewhat, tho' involuntarily, instrumental in alienating so invaluable a blessing. As a preparatory step, if it will prove in the least efficacious, I relinquish all engagements, and totally give up all claims, which we have entered upon and mutually interchanged, for the future satisfaction and security of both parties. Neither irritated by the refusal, nor chagrined at the disappointment of this honourable alliance,

fiance, I consider it my duty, as a christian and a father, to reconcile the difference and conciliate those disagreements which may have originated between such near relatives, from the discussion of a cause probably not well understood. This sacrifice I make the more willingly, because I consider youth as a stream that is easily agitated, and capable of the least motion. When it is pure and limpid, we feel an exquisite pleasure in beholding its surface; when it is ruffled by the action of the winds, it becomes turbulent and deformed, and, instead of deriving pleasure from the prospect, we retire in disgust. This I conceive to be truly emblematical of the mind of youth. When it is unruffled by contending passions, we experience a pleasure in the contemplation, and more in the enjoyment of that serenity which then surrounds it. But when it is enraged by opposition, or treated fastidiously by authority, that internal impulse of freedom which the God of Nature has im-

planted in the human breast, rises with disdain, and wisely spurns at the restrictions which a too strict obedience would exact.

Let us consider, my Lord, that you and I were once young. Let us reflect, that we enjoyed the same rational faculties with which we are now endowed, though not matured by experience, nor brought to perfection by the mellowing powers of age. This consideration, I hope, will somewhat extenuate the *supposed* criminality of a son, whose merits I have heard you dwell upon with delight. Granting this single trespass to be the result of inconsiderateness or disobedience, yet why should a single crime, and that surely a pardonable one, for ever alienate a deserving child from your affection? O, my Lord, were our Almighty Creator extreme to mark what we do amiss, how should we expect forgiveness at that tribunal before which we must all one day appear, without exception or excuse. Let this be a precedent

dent worthy of our imitation; and though from the imperfection of our natures we may fall infinitely short, yet our endeavours will be meritorious, and our advances finally rewarded. I hope you will pardon the presumption of a man, my Lord, who cautiously wishes to advise, yet dreads to dictate; whose chief aim is the dissemination of peace and good-will, and who wishes to act to all mankind as he would be acted to.

I am, &c.

G. SILVERTOP.

LETTER XXV.

FROM THE EARL OF WILTON TO SIR
G. SILVERTOP.

SIR,

THE receipt of your extraordinary epistle I acknowledge, and must acquaint you, that I am not accustomed to be dictated to in my domestic concerns. I know I have been young, Sir George, and likewise know that I am now advanced in life; but this knowledge I had obtained previously to your very officious interference in an affair concerning which I have taken my determinate measures, and am firmly resolved not to deviate from them, in compliance with the busy interposition of any self-opinionated individual. Had I asked your advice, I should then have received your counsel with that defe-

deference which is ever due to the sacred obligations of friendship. But as this intrusion was voluntary on your part, you must not be surprised, if it be received with that neglect and indifference which is the just reward of such unwelcome opinions. I am not conscious of any part of my conduct, since the commencement of our acquaintance, which could warrant such an interference; and I must seriously expostulate with the determinations of any man, who implicitly concludes I am incapable of domestic government. Such a conclusion may not only be erroneous but probably false, since nothing is more obnoxious to error than the opinions we frame on the conduct of others. The truth of this observation, the experience of every day will confirm; and you must acknowledge, that different men ever had and ever will have different opinions concerning the same subject. And am I to incur a certain degree of criminality, because I have not precisely the same view,

through the same perspective, that you have? or am I to regulate my thoughts by the same criterion of what you may deem just and right, without being permitted to draw my own conclusions? I have hitherto supposed myself a rational being, endowed with the same intellectual faculties as my fellow-creatures, and capable of determining what was right and what was wrong, especially in affairs which particularly relate to myself. This supposition of mine, I perceive, is now called in question; and you assume the unwarrantable privilege of boldly telling me, I am incapacitated for so arduous a task: Yet I am hardy enough to dare to deviate from the wisdom of your resolutions, and inform you, that my forgiveness shall be, if ever, a voluntary act, without the officiousness of any individual in the universe. By this determination of thinking for myself, I do not suppose that I transgress any of the fundamental principles of religion or morality, whose chief view in their primitive

mitive establishment was the inculcation of virtue, and the practice of every social duty. Religion is very express in teaching obedience, not only in children to their parents, but in subjects to their governors, and inferiors to their superiors; and shall I incur the displeasure of the Divinity for a strict exaction of what he himself hath taught us as an immutable and unerring law? To answer in the affirmative would be a downright absurdity, and yet I think the whole tenor of your doctrine displays a perfect congeniality deducible therefrom. Religion is venerable, but it should never be made a tool of to screen the principles of disobedience, which ever originate in the destructive dictates of immorality. Let us revere her, but receive her precepts with an implicit submission. To cavil, is the road to error; to examine too minutely, what infinite wisdom enwrapped in mystery, is to plunge into the blind abyss of deception, and to wander without a guide.

C. 5.

You

You say you are willing to relinquish all engagements, and give up all claims, which we had reciprocally entered into : but why would you make a virtue of necessity ? You must be very confident that they are all annihilated by my son's absolute refusal to fulfil them. But this I can assure you, his obstinacy shall cost him dear, and he may live to rue the day when he refused an alliance with your daughter. But in this instance, Sir George, I should have thought my age, my rank, my family, should have shielded me from impertinence, which ought not to have obtruded into my presence, and with so much flippancy reminded me of my proposed alliance. Suppose the proposal originated with me, the completion of it, you are well assured, would have added dignity to your family, if mine had received no derogation. The antiquity of my house is well known, and its celebrity such as would reflect an additional lustre, by an union, on the noblest in the British annals. Then
why

why remind me of my proposed alliance? The obligation on my part was certainly more than mutual; it would have conferred honour, and such an acquisition was much more than an overbalance for any pecuniary consideration that could have been received. Avaricious mortals may reprehend my conclusions, but real dignity is generally of too fine a texture to be perceived by the grossness of their optics. In this view of the case, my pardon would be a work of supererogation; for voluntary presumption is always sure of creating disgust, seldom of conciliating respect or good-will.

I am, &c.

WILTON.

C 6

LET.

L E T T E R XXVI.

FROM THE HON. MR. WILTON TO MR.
BENFIELD.

SIR,

THE perusal of your last packet has given me much concern, not so much from the important intelligence of your friend, the generous Mr. Bowman, as from the melancholy description of my venerable parent's affliction. O my mother, forgive me, for being, though involuntarily, instrumental to your distress! Could I have foreseen this unhappy event, I would gladly have sacrificed my own peace to have procured yours. I was a stranger to my father's inflexibility, and that harshness of disposition which embittered your days, and brought the heavy gloom of
of

of sorrow upon your grey hairs. O forgive me, forgive your truly unhappy son, and let my penitence atone for my past inconsiderateness! The day may come, and propitious Heaven grant it to the earnestness of my wish, which may not only alleviate your misery, but add a gleam of real joy to brighten your setting-sun.

The restraint under which my sister is kept, is not at all defensible, for I cannot perceive any offence which she hath committed; but if I be not mistaken in my conjectures, it will not be long that she will remain in durance. I know her spirit, and I know her resolution. There is but one tie—it is, to be sure, a very important one. But there are restrictions at which the meanest spirit will spurn with indignation; and when the moment of retribution comes, remember, Benfield, you treat the fair, the generous fugitive with that kindness, with that affection, which so noble a sacrifice demands. I know the open generosity of your nature, and that such a caution is
totally

totally unnecessary ; but you will smile at the affection of a brother, who believes you worthy of his sister's love.

The communication of Mr. Bowman has not alarmed me. The conduct of my father since my departure from Wilton-Park, has taught me to expect the worst from his harshness and obstinacy, and inured my mind to meet with fortitude the severest stroke that malice or misfortune can aim at my devoted head. But since you have engaged this honourable lawyer to apprize you of every movement in this iniquitous proceeding ; if there be a possibility of its accomplishment without my approbation or consent, I think it a duty I owe to myself and family to attempt to frustrate it, by a solemn appeal to the highest legal tribunal. If I be unsuccessful, I shall patiently sit down beneath my disappointment, and, with all the resignation and resolution of the christian and the man, repress the unavailing sigh, and tacitly drink the unpalatable draught.

The

The taste at first may be somewhat bitter, but custom, that sweetener of every evil, will soon render it familiar and agreeable.

Nature is an indulgent nurse, and wherever we survey her operations, in the animate or inanimate creation, we are immediately struck with the regular œconomy which pervades the whole. We may see affection resulting from mere instinct, which puts the human race to the blush. We may see the relative duties between parent and offspring exemplified by the nicest discrimination, and which might be an instructive lesson to the boasted children of reason. Even in the inanimate creation we may trace such distinctive order, and regular progression, through every vegetative operation, every incremental function, as strike the inquisitive observer with wonder, astonishment, and awe! Man alone is retrograde, and the very idea is derogatory, is humiliating.

Confi-

Confident of your vigilance and caution in an affair which so nearly concerns my present and future welfare, I can with more satisfaction to myself remain here, in the eager prosecution of a scheme on the favourable accomplishment of which depends my present peace. From the immediate communication of the intelligence Mr. Bowman gives you, I shall with the utmost prudence and resolution regulate my own determinations, either to remain a silent spectator of the futility of my father's attempts, or an intrepid actor to frustrate them.

I now return to the recital of my own important pursuits. The morning after I received the letter from my dear Olivia, I was torn and agitated by a diversity of conclusions. I was absolutely forbid to attempt any further correspondence, without the previous approbation of Sir Robert Bertram. Whether personally, or by letter, to acquaint him with the ardour of my passion, or to employ the worthy Mr.

Brooke

Brooke to perform this difficult task, was what I could not ultimately determine. Perplexed by the fabrication of a variety of projects, I walked forth, convinced that when the turbulency of my thoughts should have a little subsided, I should devise more rationally, and conclude more coolly. The pure ætherial expanse of heaven was clear, grand, and magnificent; the fanning western breeze was warm and delightful; the fragrance of the blossoms opening to the morning sun was cheering, agreeable, and extatic. The little warblers sweetly trilled their orisons, and seemed to hail my presence in their unfrequented retreats. I walked slowly forward, absorbed in contemplation, wrapt in the profoundest reverie, unable to conclude on any satisfactory procedure. My eyes were fixed upon the refreshing verdure of the fields, when I was suddenly startled by the sound of some prattling voices, and, looking up, I perceived Olivia with the two little sons of Mr. Brooke, busied

fied in the bottom of a hawthorn hedge, in the examination of the nest of my pretty songster. The incident was trifling, the opportunity inviting; but I felt a sudden chillness overspread me, which riveted me to the spot. I endeavoured to muster up sufficient resolution to move forward; but instead of resolution, a violent tremor succeeded, and I actually thought myself in the highest paroxysm of a fever. How long I continued in this state of irresolution, or how long I might have continued, is uncertain; but the shrill voice of my pretty cowslip-gatherer arrested my attention, and recalled to their wonted functions my scattered spirits, by crying out, "Miss Livy, Miss Livy, yonder is Mr. Wilton!" She looked around—I awoke, as from a trance, and, though conscious of my present diffidence, walked to the little party.

Upon my approach confusion was visibly depicted on her countenance, whatever might be the motive, whether from
being

being thus caught in so puerile, yet innocent, amusement, or from the presence of a person who so lately had made a discovery of a passion her charms had kindled in his bosom; however it was, I was certain of my own emotion.—We were both silent.—My eyes being fixed upon the lovely object, whenever she raised her's from the ground, they met mine, and immediately her face was overspread with a crimson suffusion, which added a grace to her natural beauty, fascinating and irresistible. I sighed involuntarily, but found myself altogether incapable of communicating what I felt—I stepped nearer—and ventured to take hold of her hand.—The touch was electrical, and my heart and pulse beat quicker from the effect. O, “Olivia,” said I, “may I crave your forgiveness for this presumptuous encroachment on your rural privacy?” She replied, “You have not offended, therefore my forgiveness is unnecessary.” I returned, “Have I then the exquisite
“pleasure

“pleasure of pouring forth in your presence the ardour of a flame as pure as ever glowed in a human breast?” She rejoined quickly, “Hold, Mr. Wilton, I have already apprized you of the terms on which I can admit of your addresses; their reasonableness is apparent, and I hope your own good sense will convince you of the impropriety of my conduct, in listening to solicitations which my duty and my honour may severely reprehend.” I felt the ascendancy of her argument, and its influence quite unhinged me. I was framing an answer, when an unwelcome visitant accosted us. “I perceive, Madam, it was not fit that Sir Robert and Lady Bertram should know of your retreat this morning; your assignation was of such a nature as ought to elude enquiry.” At the brutal asperity of this sarcasm, Olivia darted a glance of sovereign indignation and contempt, but said nothing. I fixed my eyes with a look of disdain on the satirist.

satirist. This was no other than Mr. Fennell, who added, "Sir, you are no stranger to my pretensions to this Lady, your illicit practices therefore deserve the severest animadversion."—"Pretensions illicit practices!" exclaimed Olivia, walking off, with her little comings, and darting a look at him which at once displayed her scorn and contempt. As he was preparing to follow her, I called to him, "Stop, Sir, your conduct and expressions require some explanation." Without turning round, he replied, "None, Sir, none;" and then walked away, in company with the lovely object of all my wishes.

The passiveness of my behaviour, Benfield, may probably add courage even to cowardice, and stimulate him to a repetition of deliberate insult. But repetition may arouse what the utmost valour cannot always oppose. I am not vindictive, yet not over-patient under the pressure of ill-treatment.

I am, &c.

L E T-

LETTER XXVII.

FROM THE HON. MR. WILTON TO
MR. BENFIELD.

SIR,

THE more I reflected upon the behaviour of Mr. Fennell, the more it appeared to me extraordinary, vulgar, and indefensible. His motive was evidently jealousy founded on surmise. The little attention which I had hitherto paid to Olivia, and the predilection which I had discovered for her from our first acquaintance, had not escaped his penetrating watchfulness. Unaccustomed to the vulgarity of such sarcasms, I found myself somewhat uneasy, and ardently wished to wipe away the illiberality of his aspersions by an immediate conference with Sir Robert Bertram.

This resolution being taken and duly weighed, I walked slowly towards Bertram-

tram-Hall, ruminating on the success of the discovery which I was about to make, and on which might probably depend every event of my future life. I was conscious of the purity and fervour of my passion, of the integrity of my views, and the rectitude of my intentions; but then, there were many and weighty considerations which might deter me from the final consummation of my wishes, and which might not only involve me in inextricable difficulties, but even in inevitable perdition. The prospect before me was gloomy, melancholy, and discouraging, without one cheering ray of hope to enliven my present expectations.

It is, O Benfield, when a man is thus circumstanced, and enveloped with dangers and difficulties, that he hath the greatest cause for a strenuous exertion of that fortitude which hath ever distinguished the wise man. In the midst of perplexity and vexation, of humiliation and neglect, he weighs and deliberates, he resolves and
acts

acts with that probity and candour, with that calmness and patience, which justly denominate him good, virtuous and upright. Many illustrious examples of antiquity occurred to my memory, of men who, being encompassed with perils and overwhelmed with misfortunes, have remained collected and unconcerned, when attacked with the utmost rancour, and assailed with the envenomed shafts of the most inveterate malice; who, enrobed with innate virtue, have chosen to fall her triumphant victims, rather than yield to the impetuous torrent of vice and immorality.

I sought for a parallel amongst them with whom I might compare myself, and in a fit of an enthusiastic ardour attempt to equal his merits, by a bold and daring emulation; or with all his passive apathy, and cool contempt of sublunary transactions, behold the inevitable ruin of my fortune, the discomfiture of my well-laid schemes

schemes, the defeat of avarice, and the crushing wreck of aspiring ambition.

Elated, and not depressed, with my present unfortunate situation, I deemed, in this moment of contemplation, my involuntary exile and corroding solicitude rather meritorious than reprehensible; so apt are we to embrace the glittering baubles of deception, whenever they coincide with our warped and mistaken opinion! I was, at this instant, a dupe to my own imaginary consequence, under the delusive supposition that I was a willing martyr in the amiable cause of virtue.

How many, and even great men, both amongst the ancients and moderns, have laboured under the same fallacy, and bewildered themselves in all the inextricable mazes of error! From a conviction of the impossibility of being wrong, and fascinated with their own opinion relative to causes and effects, they have fabricated the wildest chimeras and given birth to

the maddest conceptions of the human imagination. Humiliating thought! that the greatest minds should be capable of the greatest errors, and transgress with that presumption at which a vulgar mind would start and tremble. But a cool reflection, silently whispered, "What art thou, poor vain mortal! Thy misfortunes, if they can be so denominated, are of thy own acquisition; and since thou hast had the audacity to commit errors, learn philosophy, and complain not."

Such were my thoughts when I arrived at the gates of Bertram-Hall. I had frequently before opened them with pleasure and with alacrity. I now paused, and viewed them with diffidence and timidity; recollecting, that the transaction of a few minutes might involve me in perplexity and care, in anxiety and sorrow. My silence on this affair was optional, my communication of it was the same; but when done, a retraction might not be so easy. Thus wavering and undetermined,

mined, I entered.—I was welcomed by the owners of the mansion. Olivia and Mr. Fennell were present. Olivia looked serious and grave; Mr. Fennell eyed me with sullenness and contempt. Sir Robert was placid, composed, and thoughtful; whilst Lady Bertram, with a vivacity peculiarly characteristic, said, “Indeed, “Mr. Wilton, I am glad you are come; “for our conversation, previous to your “entrance, was not only serious, but likely “to take a disagreeable turn. Fennell “was positively asserting, that you are in “love with Olivia, and that the voluntary “admission of your future visits, as an unknown gentleman, would neither redound “to the credit of our prudence nor Olivia’s “delicacy.” Whilst Lady Bertram was speaking, Olivia left the room. I replied, “that the blunt freedom of Mr. Fennell might probably be termed ingenuous and honest; but if critically examined by the laws of politeness and civility, it would certainly be concluded to be not only unbecoming,

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coming, but even offensive; and that I was not conscious, upon the strictest scrutiny of my conduct since I had the honour of visiting there, of any impropriety of behaviour which might warrant such illiberality.”—“The positive asseveration of Mr. Fennell, on this topic,” answered Sir Robert “I conclude to be nothing more than
“the airy conceptions of a lover’s brain,
“fabricated in the melancholy alembic of
“green-eyed jealousy. He views her with
“a favourable opinion, and has long
“danced attendance without making any
“visible progress in her good graces, and
“without even being able to defeat the
“officiousness of poor Mr. Longford,
“whose assiduities are often pleasing, but
“never disgusting.—Pray, Mr. Wilton,
“what stay do you purpose to make in
“the North?” This interrogation, which was manifestly intended to change the subject, was evaded by the reply of Mr. Fennell, who said, “Sir Robert, though
“I have long danced attendance after the
“beautiful

“ beautiful Olivia, to what cause is it to
“ be imputed that I have made no pro-
“ gress? You have always eluded my at-
“ tempt at an explanation, and carefully
“ repressed my enquiries, whenever I
“ wished for information on a subject which
“ so nearly concerned my happiness and
“ welfare. I was very explicit; you were
“ very mysterious; and though Olivia has
“ not hitherto treated me with any appa-
“ rent marks of personal attachment, I
“ hope I shall not have the mortification
“ to be finally discarded for this more
“ favoured stranger, whose pretensions to
“ family or fortune may be not only
“ vague and ambiguous, but delusive,
“ and falsely assumed.” Irritated at the
illiberality of the observation, I retorted,
“ Sir Robert, it was my determination
“ this day to avow my passion for Olivia,
“ and solicit your permission to prefer
“ my suit, after I had acquainted you
“ with my family, fortune and connections.
“ The illiberal aspersions of Mr. Fennell

“ I shall treat with that contempt which
“ they deserve, and with that silence which
“ carries more disdain than the most inve-
“ terate sarcasm. Know then, Sir Robert,
“ Lady Bertram, and Mr. Fennell, that I
“ really love Olivia—yes, love her with
“ as pure a passion as can warm the hu-
“ man breast ; and am fully determined,
“ if so happy as to merit the approbation
“ of her honourable parents, immediately
“ to prosecute with all the ardour of a real
“ lover that passion, the happy and fortu-
“ nate completion of which will alleviate
“ an accumulating weight of sorrows, and
“ woefully add” (looking at Mr. Fen-
nell) “ to your disappointment. Sir Ro-
bert, if you will be so obliging as to
“ favour me with a private audience of
“ a few minutes, I shall endeavour to
“ dissipate every insinuation which envy
“ may expect to operate to my discredit.”

Sir Robert arose, and whilst he was walking towards the door, Lady Bertram exclaimed, “ Mr. Fennell, what is the
“ matter

“matter with you? Are you not well; or
 “are you afraid of losing your mistress?”
 Mr. Fennell replied, “Sir Robert!” (Sir
 Robert turned round, when Mr. Fennell,
 with a hesitating and faltering tone,
 continued) “As this gentleman has seem-
 “ingly got something of importance to
 “communicate, I desire you may not
 “leave the room; I shall withdraw.”
 He was visibly agitated—his face was
 pale—his lips trembled as he spoke—and
 now and then he viewed me with a sullen
 aspect of resentment and malice. He bowed
 obsequiously to Sir Robert and Lady
 Bertram—again he eyed me—his colour
 changed—and, without a bow to me, he
 abruptly left the room.

Lady Bertram observed, she could not
 help laughing at the manifest mortification
 and sullen deportment of Mr. Fennell,
 whose suspicions of a rival had cast a shade of
 illiberality over his conduct of late, which
 impartial justice must severely condemn,
 and candour abhor. “But come, Mr.

“Wilton, sit down and favour us with an
“explanation of some of your comic ad-
“ventures.—Cast away that grave face,
“and”—“Hush, hush, my dear,” said
Sir Robert, “Mr. Wilton has something
“of another nature to impart, which may
“be of more consequence than to make
“you laugh.”—I then told them, my
name, the cause why I had left Wilton-
Park, and took up my residence in the
North—and, as a confirmation of what I
said, offered them the perusal of my let-
ters, which they politely refused. I asked
permission to address Olivia; which was
granted. Lady Bertram said, she would
not then laugh at what I had communi-
cated; yet she hoped to live to see the day
when she should indulge herself in that
pleasure, without the fear of a rebuke
from Sir Robert. Though I did not un-
derstand her meaning clearly, I added, I
hoped her prophecy would prove true.
She curtsied, and replied, she would run and
tell

tell Olivia all the wonders she had heard, as she was certain they would please her. Sir Robert thanked me for my ingenuousness, and said, Olivia should be perfectly left to her own decision in so important an affair. I assented to his candour, and retired.

I am, &c.

D 5

LET.

LETTER XXIX.

FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME.

SIR,

I PERCEIVED my communication had exonerated my mind of a constant pressing load of solicitude. I was perfectly easy from that fluctuation of sentiment which had kept my thoughts in the most disagreeable suspense, corroded my peace, and warped my judgement. I had long deliberated before I resolved; I hesitated when I began to act; but since I had performed my resolution, my conduct, in this particular instance, met with my warmest approbation and applause.

Thus, I believe, it often happens with a contemplative person: he is much more diffident of his own powers than one who is less conversant with the decisions of his own mind, less anxious for the event of futurity, and altogether careless as to the success of operations which the former even dreads

dreads to make the subject of meditation. The more any man thinks, it is an absolute certainty, the less he will act; and when he is timid and suspicious, too fearful and solicitous, he frequently loses the fortunate hour of operation, which can never be recalled with the utmost exertion of human skill. Precipitation may be too hasty, and caution too slow.

Whilst I was agreeably employed in this musing strain, congratulating myself on the seeming success of my first advances, my hostess entered and informed me, a gentleman at the door desired to speak with me. On walking to the door, I saw Mr. Fennell, who acquainted me, that he called upon business of importance, and which required an immediate discussion. I told him, I was ready to enter upon the discussion, if he would do me the favour to alight and walk in. He dismounted, and ordered his servant to walk the horses at no great distance, until he should be wanted.

As soon as we were seated, Mr. Fennell addressed me as follows: "Sir, though you
"are only a late resident in the North, you
"are no stranger to my pretensions to Olivia;
"via; your present interposition, therefore
"with a view to thwart my pursuits, requires some explanation, and
"which I am come this morning to demand"—I replied, "I was informed,
"Mr. Fennell, from a source of the
"highest credibility, from Sir Robert and
"Lady Bertram, that Olivia was under
"no pre-engagement, either to you or
"any other gentleman; I therefore conclude
"I have an undisputed right to become
"a candidate for her affections, without
"consulting the approbation of any
"individual whatever, except of those
"to whom she owes duty and obedience."
"—He returned, "I have nothing to do
"with what you conclude, Sir, nor will I be
"determined by your conclusions. You are
"very conscious of my prior right, from my
"prior acquaintance;

“quaintance ; and, having first paid my
“addresses, I think it is but equitable
“that I should not be discarded by the
“lady in consequence of your inter-
“ference.”—I could not forbear smiling
during his delivery of these sentiments.
He observed me, and said, “You may
“smile as you please, Sir, but I am de-
“termined—I will not be insulted by
“impertinence—I will not be superseded
“by officiousness. My offers are ho-
“nourable, liberal, and I think unex-
“ceptionable, and probably would, ere
“this, have been accepted by the dear
“object of all my wishes, had not you,
“like an evil star, shed a baleful influence,
“and immaturely blasted all the opening
“buds of my promising expectations.”

He was vehemently agitated—he grew
pale and livid—clashing and grinding his
teeth, and viewing me with the keen glance
of indignation. I replied, “Mr. Fen-
“nell, will you give me an open and inge-
“nuous answer to a simple interrogation?”

He

He returned, "Certainly."—"Have you
" then any positive promise from Olivia
" of an exclusive preference by which
" you are authorized to interdict the ho-
" nourable addresses of any other gentle-
" man?" He answered sullenly and with
some hesitation, "I have not."—"Then,
" Sir (I continued), your plea of a prior
" acquaintance certainly confers no right,
" nor prohibits any other gentleman from
" the laudable pursuit of what you have
" only a distant hope of obtaining. I
" consider every woman as a free agent,
" mistress of her own actions, and amena-
" ble to no one, save to those whom God
" and nature have endowed with autho-
" rity to exact obedience in conformity
" to their equitable dictates, by which
" her present welfare and future happiness
" may be ensured. Since, by your own
" acknowledgement, you have no positive
" promise from the fair Olivia, no exclu-
" sive privilege or distinguishing prefe-
" rence from Sir Robert and Lady Ber-
tram,

“tram, I cannot conceive any right you
“have to issue a prohibitory mandate,
“forbidding any one to address the lady
“without your authority.”—“My right,”
exclaimed he, springing from his chair,
“I am determined to maintain, and I
“here insist on your relinquishing all
“claim, and foregoing all addresses, un-
“til I have my ultimate sentence from the
“lips of Olivia herself.”—“A moment’s
“reflection, Sir,” resumed I, “will con-
“vince you of the impropriety of this be-
“haviour, which derogates from your cha-
“racter as a gentleman, without the least
“addition to the fund of your intellectual
“attainments. I am not to be intimi-
“dated from my purpose by such an au-
“thoritative interposition, nor deterred
“from a pursuit on which I am determi-
“nately bent by this dictatorial interfe-
“rence. My hopes are yet in embryo,
“I am only a novice in love; but I
“suppose you will not attempt to impose
“an inhibition where you are very con-
“fident

“fident you have no power.”—He rejoined, “However you may dispute my power, I am confident in my right. Priority of possession, in equity and justice, always confers a right; and though you may by arguments of sophistication combat, you will never be able to overturn, this self-evident principle.”—“Possession, Mr. Fennell, when legally and justly obtained, always confers a right in things which are either to be bought or sold; but where is the analogy between the first advances for a lady’s affection and the highest bidder for a hunting horse?”—This repartee being pronounced with somewhat of a sarcastic sneer, which the absurdity of his argument had stimulated, gave a loose to the ebullitions of a passion that neither prudence nor common sense could warrant. “Mr. Wilton,” exclaimed he, “your perseverance for the possession of my charming Olivia will provoke what your immediate recession will never prompt.”

“You

“ You must instantly give me a satisfactory
“ answer to a single question, or I here
“ inform you, that your own behaviour
“ shall either confirm me a steady friend
“ or render me a formidable enemy. Will
“ you acknowledge my prior claim, and
“ apologize for your officious interposi-
“ tion ?”—“ Mr. Fennell, you have ver-
“ bally acknowledged you have no claim
“ but what exists in your overheated ima-
“ gination. To make an apology when
“ I have committed no offence, would be
“ a species of timidity with which I have
“ hitherto been unacquainted ; and, how-
“ ever I may wish to esteem you as a
“ friend, I must inform you I will never
“ purchase your friendship by such dege-
“ nerate servility. As to your terrific threat
“ of being a formidable enemy, I shall con-
“ fide in the laws of my country for the
“ defence of my property, and in my own
“ arm for the safeguard of my person.”
He paused some time before he answered ;
at last he said, “ Is this, Sir, your final
“ de-

“determination?” I replied, “It is.”
“Then,” returned he, “since you refuse to
“settle this business amicably, you may
“rest assured of hearing from me in the
“space of a few days.” He retired without
ceremony, and I smiled at his threat.

Now, Benfield, how do you suppose
this affair will terminate? He attempted
to brave me into a cowardly accommoda-
tion; I was steady to my purpose, and
scorn to temporize with any man on so
delicate an affair, much less to be intimi-
dated and driven from the prosecution of
a business wherein is involved my pre-
sent peace or final wretchedness.

But let me entreat you, O solemnly let
me beg of you, not to let a syllable of
this conversation escape you in your
correspondence with my sister, until you
are apprized of its termination. I hesi-
tated, when I sat down to write, whether
or not I should acquaint you with it; but a
thorough conviction of your friendship and
fidelity quickly removed my scruples, and
I have

I have communicated the whole business, in an ample detail.

The propriety of the above inhibition you will readily acknowledge. A mother's fears for the personal safety of her son — a sister's timid thoughts, ever presaging the worst of an event, would only embitter and add a deeper shade to that gloom of distress which at present pervades our once happy family.

O Happiness, where is thy sequestered retreat ! Thou hast escaped my most ardent search amidst the noise, the bustle, the din and riot of the city ; and here, in this solitary recess, where I vainly expected to have found thy habitation, thou again deceivest me, and corrodest my mind with the phantoms of Deception. Happy infancy ! that always givest enjoyment without the fretting sting of care ! Thy pleasures, though fleeting, were ever seasoned with the real zest of fruition.

I was anxious to see Mr. Brooke, that I might inform him of my reception by the
Bertram

Bertram family, and ask his advice in my affair with Mr. Fennell, which probably may be attended with very serious consequences. I found him, as usual, in his study. He was perusing the *Metaphysics* of Aristotle, upon which he commented with much profundity and acuteness, saying, he wondered how so much learning and industry could be so ill applied to the elucidation of a subject that was enwrapped in impenetrable darkness, and had employed the utmost efforts of genius, and puzzled all the seminaries of Europe for so many centuries. I replied, "Mr. Brooke, a metaphysical disquisition, even on the merits or demerits of that great master of all knowledge, has at present no charms for me." He smiled with complacency upon me. I then informed him of my success, as I rapturously termed it, of being permitted to visit and pay my addresses to the loveliest of her sex. He expressed his pleasure, and assured me I should find her, from a more intimate acquaint-

acquaintance, worthy of the appellation I had in the fondness of my passion bestowed upon her.—I next apprized him of my interview with Mr. Fennell, and the consequences that were likely to follow it. He appeared very serious at the information, and said, “ Mr. Fennell is a
“ gentleman of an ample fortune, good
“ connexions, and of great authority in the
“ county. His education was defective,
“ and, from a constant attention to the sa-
“ vage amusements of the chace, he has
“ contracted a rusticity, or rather a bruti-
“ lity in his behaviour. He is impatient of
“ the least controul, and the most gentle con-
“ tradiction of his opinion throws him into
“ a violent paroxysm of rage and fury. This
“ *trait* in his conduct, I suppose, he has ac-
“ quired from an association with his menial
“ domestics, whom he rules with the rod of
“ tyranny; sometimes making them the
“ companions of his amusements; at others,
“ upon the smallest transgression, or even
“ omission of their expected duty, treating
“ them

“ them with all the severity which an irri-
“ tated malice can suggest. Hence he is
“ served by the trembling tools of fear and
“ servility, and meets with no esteem from
“ those whom his ample fortune compels to
“ surround and flatter him, but not to love
“ and respect him. His tenants are in ge-
“ neral racked beyond what the utmost in-
“ dustry and the amplest produce can bear ;
“ and the consequence is, arrears of rent, for
“ which the honest farmer is immediately
“ arrested his stock and crop seized, and
“ frequently sold below their real value, to
“ satisfy the unruly passion of power, or the
“ unbounded demon of avarice ; and thus
“ he savagely and wantonly turns an innocent
“ and helpless family adrift on the world,
“ for the poor and sordid gratification of
“ enjoying what he does not want, the ac-
“ cumulation of a few pounds, which pro-
“ bably he may bestow upon his groom, or
“ give them for a hunter, just as the phan-
“ tom of caprice may stimulate him. He
“ is an implacable and inveterate enemy,
“ but

“ but a precarious and unstable friend. I
“ would advise you to consult Sir Robert,
“ and take his opinion on the business.” I
expressed my acquiescence, and begged he
would favour me with his company to
Bertram-hall.

We found Sir Robert and Lady Bertram walking in the garden, and whilst Mr. Brooke entertained the lady, I took the opportunity to acquaint Sir Robert with the circumstance, and the whole of Mr. Fennell’s extraordinary behaviour. He paused and looked thoughtful—then said,
“ From a perfect knowledge of Mr. Fennell’s character and disposition, I am not
“ at all surprised at his behaviour towards
“ you. He is not accustomed to opposition ; hence his chagrin and irritability,
“ at being checked in his progress, as
“ he imagines, by your interposition, and
“ declaring yourself a candidate for the affection of Olivia. His attendance is of
“ some duration; his attention has been constant and assiduous ; his offers are noble,
“ honour-

“honourable, and magnificent; yet, what-
“ever may be the cause, his advances have
“been coolly received, and, though she hath
“never treated him with insult, he hath al-
“ways experienced the most mortifying ne-
“glect. This he hath often complained of
“to me, even in the presence of Olivia.
“When I have rallied him upon the na-
“ture of his despondency, Lady Bertram
“has laughed at his amorous whining,
“while Olivia would gravely and seriously
“add a sly replication to any cautious in-
“terrogatory which would at once have un-
“hinged his resolution and rendered him a
“sullen mute during the remainder of his
“visit. When I consider the man, his
“techy, forward pride, vain of his ancestry,
“and ambitious of his fortune, I cannot
“help being lost in amazement at his com-
“placency and humility in the pursuit of
“an object he is not likely to obtain. But
“love, Mr. Wilton, is omnipotent, sub-
“duing by an irresistible influence the most
“savage temper and untameable disposition.
“Some

“ Some have been long subjugated by am-
 “ bition, some by avarice, some by dissipa-
 “ tion, and others by intemperance. All
 “ have their ruling passion ; but Love may
 “ be said to be omnipotent, whilst the
 “ philosopher and the spendthrift, the hero
 “ and the miser, equally acknowledge his
 “ over-ruling power, and for a temporary
 “ enjoyment relax from the avidity of
 “ their darling pursuits.”

Sir Robert concluded, and I thanked
 him for his information relative to Mr.
 Fennell; when he said, “ Mr. Wilton,
 “ take no further cognizance of your in-
 “ terview with him : if he prosecute his
 “ threat, as probably he may, civility
 “ and gentle usage may happily conciliate,
 “ when opposition and resentment would
 “ only operate to inflame a mischievous
 “ design. Concession, where there is no
 “ offence, is unnecessary ; but remember,
 “ that the bravest men have been always
 “ the most polite.” I acknowledged the
 justice of his remark ; and, Mr. Brooke soon
 after joining us, we retired. I am, &c.

LETTER XXIX.

FROM MR. BENFIELD TO THE HON. MR.
WILTON.

SIR,

I PERCEIVE, by the communication of your passion to the Bertram family, you have alleviated your anxiety, but acquired a formidable opponent, and, I conclude, an inveterate enemy. To be thwarted in love by a more favoured admirer, is not easily forgiven or readily forgotten; it conveys an insult to the understanding and a slight to the person of the unfortunate rival. This leaves a sting that will long corrode and rankle, will prompt the infernal spirit of revenge, and take a horrid pleasure in embittering the peace of him, if not destroying his existence, whose virtues were deemed more worthy of reward and accomplishments of acceptance.

This

This is the real case with yourself and Mr. Fennell. He is exasperated at his supposed disappointment—he is revengeful from the instigations of dark-brooding malice, and would rather enjoy the horrid triumph of assassination, than sit down peaceably under the supposition of his ridiculous defeat. His sullen behaviour and assuming arrogance were sufficiently demonstrative of his concealed envy, and which you have borne with all the calmness and patience of the most determined philosophy.

There is a certain dignity which every man owes to himself, and which he ought not to suffer himself to be deprived of, lest he should become the butt of petulance and the dupe of stupidity. You know a man may be too good-natured, and suffer his resolution to grow tame beneath the asperity of insult and the sauciness of impertinent effrontery. This will not well consort with your maxims of christianity and philosophy, which inculcate patience

E 2 and

forbearance under the severest trials; and though you know me to be a christian, I am but an indifferent philosopher, for I shall ever conclude insult as well as pain to be an evil. You may smile at my conclusion; but if I am not mistaken, you will soon have full exercise for all your patience and philosophy, and find them but feeble weapons to repel the furious attacks of your impetuous assailant Mr. Fennell. You have every thing to dread from the secret machinations and the visible attacks of such an enemy.

If his vehemence compel you to extremities, I expect you will plead for a short delay, by which my presence may probably prove of some little service to you in a part of the kingdom where you are a perfect stranger. The worthy Mr. Brooke, from the sacredness of his function, will have just cause to plead an exemption from interfering. He is the minister of peace, and your application to him, in the moment previous to action, would cer-

certainly be improper. Sir Robert will as certainly decline any active part, lest his apparent preference might not only irritate the malicious principal, but diffuse the seeds of a lasting enmity amongst all his connections. He may attempt an accommodation, but your opponent seems to have too much irritability in his composition to admit of any honourable terms. Satisfaction is often demanded for a mere slip in the flippancy of inconsideration; what then must be expected from this deliberate son of personal insult?

Forgive, my Wilton, this honest warmth! It is expressed in the cause of my friend; and though I have no pretensions to the gift of prophecy, you may depend upon my prediction when I assure you, from the character given of Mr. Fennell both by Sir Robert and Mr. Brooke, that a rencounter will be inevitable.

My patience is a bad shield for my temper, when I take an impartial review

of his whole behaviour towards you. The gentleman was laid aside, but the hero was not assumed. True courage is like the latent spark, which appears by collision.

I must now acquaint you with the intelligence which I have received from Mr. Bowman. He was five days at Wilton-Park, and during the most of that time diligently employed in the perusal of those legal instruments by which your family have enjoyed their estates and honours for some centuries. His investigation and opinion were not consentaneous to the ardent wishes of your father, for he declared the utter impracticability of a legal dissolution of the entail without your consent. Your father was much irritated, and seemed greatly disappointed at this opinion; but declared it was his ultimate resolution, that if either law, interest, or money, could complete it, it should not be left undone. He added, moreover, that so undutiful a son, who had degraded the dignity of his family by his disobedience, ought never

never to enjoy the honours and privileges which had so long and eminently distinguished the family of Wilton.

Mr. Bowman communicated this by letter, wherein he promised to acquaint me with any future proceedings on this business, if he should be applied to, as he is certain that Lord Wilton will prosecute it to the utmost of his power. He never saw your sisters, and very seldom your venerable mother, who did not seem to be apprized of the nature of the business which had brought him to Wilton-Park. He is lavish in his encomiums on her, and thinks it peculiarly unfortunate that all her sweet attentions and mild expostulations should meet with so ungracious a reception.

Virtue will certainly meet with a reward, even in this transitory scene of existence, which will amply requite all its former sufferings, and reward the sufferer, to the manifest regret of the dissipated votaries of vice. Why wickedness should triumph, is a question which has puzzled the wisest of all ages; therefore

you must not expect an elucidation of such an abstruse subject from me, who am totally unequal to so abstract a discussion. That this is too often the case, the experience of every day convinces me; but why, I confess my ignorance, with a firm reliance on the justice of the all-wise Disposer of Events, whose wisdom in the distribution of his favours here below will be one day demonstrated to the entire satisfaction of all his creatures; who may now murmur at his dispensations, from the partial view they have of them, but when his general providence shall be manifested, it will then appear evidently that all things were ordered for the best.

Prythee, Wilton, do not laugh at me, although I have preached thee a Sermon. I have sometimes my serious hours, when I meditate with the profoundest awe on the goodness of our Creator and the unworthiness of his creatures. I have not yet learned the fashionable phrase, of religion being beneath the care and practice
of

of a gentleman; of whom, however obsolete the usage may be, there are many whose abilities and erudition are more than sufficient to put the greatest champion of modern infidelity to the blush.

I had almost forgot to acquaint you, that the inclosed is part of my never-ending correspondence; yet I have the happiness to acquaint you, that my dear Antonet hath again got her release: but should her disobedience be discovered by the watchful eyes of Argus, what would be the consequence? I could almost find in my heart to discover it myself; it would be a means of precipitating what obstinacy and perverseness have too long protracted.

I am, &c.

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LETTER XXX.

FROM MR. BENFIELD TO THE HON.
MISS WILTON.

MY DEAR ANTONET,

ALTHOUGH, by the fertility of your invention, a correspondence is again commenced between us, which by the prohibitory mandates of a father had undergone a temporary suspension, yet I cannot forbear lamenting the continuance of it, and hourly wishing for a happy conclusion of it. That I love you—yes, love you with a pure and disinterested passion—a passion which has for several years embittered my happiness, and tinged my earthly cup with the gall of bitterness—you are already acquainted with. Then why, O why, my Antonet, would you wish to protract the misery of a man, who is vain
enough

enough to conclude he stands unrivalled in your affection? Proud of this distinction, and ambitious of this honour, what days of unhappiness, and nights of wretchedness, have I not suffered, in hopes of bringing to a favourable decision, an union which would make me the happiest amongst the sons of men! How, like an airy phantom, has this opinion deluded me, and led me forward from day to day, from year to year; whilst the promised joy seemed always within my grasp, yet wantonly eluded my most ardent attempts, and left me sorrowing in the deepest abyss of disappointment.

Shall I hope, shall I live in the full expectation of having my hope one day accomplished, and amply enjoy the untroubled fruition of those pleasures, which you, yes, you alone can confer upon a willing captive to your merit? Yes, I will hope, yes, I will live in this expectation; and may the accomplishment be certain, may it be speedy! and may it bring that

peace to my troubled breast, to which has long been a stranger, and never enjoyed in the smallest degree since you robbed me of my not unwilling heart !

Have you duly and considerately weighed the proposal I made you, when last I had the pleasure of your company ? It was not, my Antonet, dictated by the impulse of the moment ; no, it was the result of mature deliberation, and the conclusion of my most serious thoughts. Come, come then to my arms, confer, and participate of that happiness, which absence, which cruel suspense, corrodes, and totally destroys. O why would you longer delay, why would you tantalize, and deprive me of that peace, which you are solely able to confirm and establish !

From the tenderness of your nature, and the susceptibility of your feelings, I have not the least suspicion that you wish to play the tyrant, and rivet those chains the faster which were at first imposed by your loveliness and amiability.

O Antonet !

O Antonet! I was happy, I was at peace, till I knew you; then I became a spontaneous captive to your charms, and from that moment I may with truth affirm tranquillity has fled my bosom. My grief is pungent, my solicitude is permanent; come to my arms, then, my Antonet, come to my arms, dispel my grief, ease my solicitude, and make me completely happy. Let not money, let not fortune, paltry consideration! deter you. I have enough for both you and me. My estate is large, my fortune is ample; come then to my arms, give me yourself, and take my fortune. I think not that the loss of a few thousands will ever cost me a thought, or give me one moment of discontent, whilst I am perfectly blessed in the affections of my Antonet. I have already sufficient to enable us to live with splendour, to diffuse ease and competence amongst my dependants, who were many of them the domestics of my father, and who have long enjoyed their little with
much

much more content than myself, to whom they look up with a distant look of awe and reverence. Happy mortals ! who pass away the “ noiseless tenor of their lives,” strangers to the cares of opulence and grandeur !

You say you have one motive for denying my request, which is an urgent and a prevalent one. You remind me of having a father. True, I have, and a father who never exerted his authority to destroy the natural and common privileges of his son ; who hath, with the tenderest sensibility of an indulgent parent, been ever more ready to administer to my innocent desires, than I have been to demand the means of gratification.

Yes, my Antonet, I have a father, who will treat you with more gentleness, more tenderness, and more real affection, than you have long experienced from your natural parent. He has been regularly apprized of every particular incident relative to our long attachment ; and though he gently animadverts upon Lord Wilton’s tyrannical behaviour,

behaviour, he expresses his entire approbation of the amiable conduct of the daughter.

His years have not impaired his understanding; and though time hath scattered its silver frost upon his head, he is cheerful, lively and intelligent; willing to allow every amusement, compatible with the precepts of virtue, to the youthful part of his species, well knowing that innocence may comport with cheerfulness, and diversion with morality. May the hoary hand of Time be long long waved over his venerable head! and may he at last drop into his grave, like the ripened ear, full of age, as he is already full of good works!

My Antonet, he says he will be a father to you; will cherish your hopes, assuage your sorrows, and from his experience lead you through the thorny mazes of this troublesome life. Then fly to the arms of a husband, to the counsels of a father, who longs to bestow his blessing on his amiable adopted daughter, and shed the cheerful ray of peace on the mansion
of

of the aged and the virtuous. Grey hairs are honourable, and, when decorated with the palms of virtue, are a crown of glory to the wearer.

Think, my angel, think, should the ghastly tyrant of the human race lay his leaden hand on the head of your venerable mother, which Heaven long avert, would your situation be agreeable, or even tolerable? Would such an unfortunate event ameliorate the temper of your father, or soothe him into kindness towards the dear pledges she would leave behind her? The trial might not probably answer your expectation; and, when thus circumstanced, to whom could you with propriety complain, when that tongue which soothed your sorrows, when that heart which beat but for your happiness, are mouldering and mingling with their native dust! She being gone, what friend on earth will treat you with that tenderness, what hand will shield you from the pelting storms of life, what heart feel and melt at your sorrows

equal

equal to that of your faithful Benfield? When the crimson tinge of health blooms upon your cheek, when the smile of joy glances from your eye, it shall be my hourly study to preserve the one, and add to the enjoyments of the other. If the chilly touch of sickness should blight the blushing rose upon your cheek, and blast the sweetening smile of joy which glanced from your eye, I would sit by your bed, kiss the paleness from your lips, and, if I could not assuage your pain, would administer consolation, and weep over your sufferings.

Believe me, when I assert you will experience my affection to be unalterable, not lessened by time, nor impaired by possession. It has already undergone a long and severe trial; then form a favourable resolution, and instantly execute it, that my patience may be amply rewarded, and my constant love merit your approbation, and be crowned with assured success. Time steals on with rapid footsteps, while
Age,

Age, his inseparable companion, creeps close behind; and whilst we delay, and tarry in an inefficacious parley, they come pressing forward, and may lay their cold fingers on our unsuspecting foreheads.

Let us then seriously consider what we are doing; let us not only reflect, but let us determine to act. Of what hours, what days, nay, of what years of happiness and pleasure have we not deprived ourselves by a filial compliance with that refractory turn of mind which is neither softened by time nor soothed by solicitation! Then come, my Antonet, come and rest upon my bosom, where alone you may repose your sorrows, and where, if you find not always a speedy relief, you will ever experience a certain alleviation.

Why are you so diffident of your sister Sophy? She is advancing fast to years of maturity; She is neither void of discretion or affection for her honourable mother. Cannot you confide in her tenderness? May she not be the gentle companion and the
soothing

soothing minister in the heavy hour of distress? I think she may. Reflect!—you will reside only a few miles distance from Wilton-Park, and a constant communication may be easily supported, by which you may pass and repass with little more difficulty, than if you were a daily resident beneath your father's roof.

Let these arguments prevail, for I can think of no others.—I turn giddy when I review my former disappointments—let your resolution prevent them for the future.

Since you have devised a method for our epistolary correspondence, would not the same effect a personal interview? I think it is not impracticable. Let your sister, your maid who is already in the secret, or even your mother, attend you; and, O Antonet, let not too nice a scrupulosity, too strict an adherence to your duty, deter you from a compliance with my innocent request. I shall come disguised

guised and unattended, to prevent discovery. May the thought prove auspicious, and the interview fortunate ! I shall await your answer with all the ardour and all the impatience which the fervour of my passion demands.

I am, Yours, &c.

LETTER

LETTER XXXI.

FROM THE HON. MISS WILTON TO
MR. BENFIELD.

SIR,

YOUR letter has perplexed and rendered me unhappy. I have perused it over and over again. It is written with unusual ardour. Your expressions are more rapturous than formerly, your sensibility more upon the stretch, and your affection even more explicit. To what motive shall I ascribe the change? I know, from long experience, it must be a laudable one. To adduce those arguments for a further procrastination which have already been so often canvassed, would be tedious and irksome; and I confess myself utterly at a loss to fabricate or invent any which are new. The first still operate with their original force, and
militate

militate against any thing that can be urged to overturn their energy, since the primitive cause still remains.

O Benfield, why would you persuade me to so unwarrantable a proceeding at this critical conjuncture, when my dear brother, by an act of inconsideration, hath involved our whole family in sorrow and distress? And would you induce me, by a similar act of disobedience, to add to that gloom of sorrow which is already too dismal? You know your influence, you have long known it; then do not attempt to pervert my weakness from those paths of duty which were early inculcated by the wisdom of a parent, whom I shall honour and revere whilst memory shall bring her virtues and her worth to my recollection.

You know my affection; it is permanent, it is unalterable; it has long stood the shock of an enraged parent; and though in this instance I cannot plead my duty, I assure you, by the vows of the
most

most sacred love, it will remain firm and unshaken to its original purpose.

This determination you are very confident has not added to my peace, but accumulated day by day misery and discontent. But what we cannot avoid, even by a strict adherence to the precepts of virtue, it is an incumbent obligation to suffer with patience and resignation.

The recapitulation of the unhappy effects of your constant passion, however pleasing, however soothing to the vanity of our sex, was certainly unnecessary. I have long experienced from you that unalterable love, that unceasing attachment to promote my peace and augment my happiness, which are the inseparable attendants on an unshaken constancy and perseverance. You have long convinced me of the purity and fervour of your intentions; I have given an implicit confidence, and listened with increasing pleasure to your vows, in full hopes of a happy consummation of all our wishes; then what can
be

be more obligatory than this chaste confidence, what more binding than the acknowledgement of increasing pleasure when listening to your vows?

O Benfield, rely on my sincerity, and tempt not the weakness of a woman, who you know loves you, to transgress the just limits of that duty and obedience prescribed to her by the laws of her Creator, and pointed out to her by all the precepts of un sullied virtue.

If you have been rendered unhappy and discontented by the prevention of a mutual intercourse, believe me when I assert, the calmness of repose and the sweets of peace have seldom been my portion. You, from a privilege common to your sex, may alleviate your sorrows by a communication with a friend of tried fidelity; but even this relief is mostly denied to us, by the peculiar delicacy and constant reserve which custom hath imposed upon the softness of our natures. How many sleepless nights have I passed, how often
have

have I wet my pillow with my silent tears, after a vain and ineffectual struggle between duty and affection. The deepening shade of night has closed upon my sorrow, and the enlivening ray of the welcome morning has tinged the chambers of the east, yet the soft, the often-invoked touch of sleep has never closed my heavy eyes. Waking and restless, the only pleasure I could enjoy was in the soothing retrospect of the many hours I had experienced from your kindness and affection.

Oh Benfield, a perusal of these last sentences excites a crimson tinge upon my countenance, and tenderly reproaches me for my indiscreet confession. Delicacy would have expunged them, but affection pleaded more strongly for their insertion; and if you feel half the emotion from the perusal which I have felt in the composition, let your well-known tenderness throw a veil over my weakness, and intercede for the soft effusions of my folly.

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Though sufficiently conscious of your disinterestedness, let me not be branded with capriciousness when I aver, I can never determine on becoming the wife of any man, to be the mere dependent on his beneficence. This makes your contempt of earthly pageantry the more conspicuous, and hath endeared me more, if possible, to him who is capable of making such a proposal. My acceptance would hurt my sensibility; my compliance might be construed, by the votaries of calumny and reproach, into meanness, into servility.

My wish, the most ardent wish of my heart, is to meet the man of my choice on the equitable footing of love and independence. Blame not my resolution; I have the firmest reliance on your honour; and though I have not the least scruple of being as acceptable to my Benfield without adding one iota to his fortune, as though I should bring him millions, yet I have this peculiarity in my opinion; and I wish to enjoy it, without
hesitating

hesitating to declare to you these independent sentiments.

Your father, how amiable in his age, how pleasing is his evening fun ! May he for many years to come be a blessing to his son, and to all around him ! What pleasure would it give me to call him father ! what consolation to be called his daughter ! But remember, it is my daily charge to still the wintry storms of declining age, to soothe the bitterness of anguish, and carefully wipe away the tear of discontent. And would you seduce me to desert my charge, to forsake that post which God and nature have assigned me ? I think not. Remember you have a father.

Your proposition of an interview I have candidly considered, and to allay my scruples, to dissipate my doubts, I made the communication to my honoured mother. She started at the proposal.— I tenderly asked the cause of her emotion ; when she said, “ My dear child, I know

“ the constancy of your affection for Mr.
 “ Benfield, I know the fidelity of your long
 “ attachment, and yet I am not precipitate
 “ to condemn you. Your constancy may
 “ meet, I am sure it merits, a future reward,
 “ and your fidelity will certainly triumph
 “ over all impediments. I perceive it is not
 “ your intention to deceive ; otherwise,
 “ Mr. Benfield would not have proposed or
 “ you communicated the wish for me to
 “ accompany you. This is perfectly co-
 “ incident with the first principles of your
 “ education, which was virtuous, moral,
 “ and religious. He says, he will come
 “ disguised and unattended, to prevent
 “ discovery—as a discovery might be at-
 “ tended with the most dreadful conse-
 “ quences.—Do you wish, Antonet, for an
 “ interview?”—“ My dear mother, you
 “ are no stranger to my inclination ; but
 “ I will endeavour to suppress my wish, if
 “ it militate against your approbation.”—
 “ To indulge my children in what is in-
 “ nocent and virtuous, was always my
 “ chief

“chief delight ; and possibly I may not
“transgress the strictest rules of propriety
“by voluntarily accompanying you to
“meet the gentleman with whom you are
“solicitous to be united. I would rather
“the storm fell upon me than upon your
“sister. Appoint your hour—I will at-
“tend you.”

This determination, made with her wonted goodness at the apparent hazard of her tranquillity, quite overcame me—my heart was full—she saw and felt the soft emotion—I expressed my gratitude in silence.

To-morrow evening, at five o'clock, we expect you in Wilton Wood.

I am, &c.

LETTER XXXII.

FROM THE HON. MR. WILTON TO MR.
BENFIELD.

SIR,

YOU seem to be more precipitate in proposing to share the dangers, than Mr. Fennell to determine the decision of my fate. Notwithstanding his peremptory behaviour at our last interview, his terrific threat at his departure, and all strengthened by the unfavourable character I had received of him, I have not yet heard a syllable more from him. To meet him as a man of courage, I have not the least dread; to meet him as a Christian, a solemn fear rushes upon my soul, and quite unmans me with its sacred impression. To decline meeting him upon such a cause, if honourably called upon, would by the
modish

modish devotees to the reigning customs, be construed into downright poltroonery and cowardice. By accepting his call, I know I shall palpably transgress against the plainest dictates of our holy religion, the suggestions of my own conscience, and the established laws of my country. Religion expressly prohibits the attempting to deprive a fellow creature of his existence, and dreadfully threatens the severest vengeance on him who shall daringly and wantonly rush into his awful presence without his previous permission.

Conscience is an inward monitor, an emanation of the Divinity, implanted in the mind of man to warn him from error, and correct the voluntary commission of crimes. The laws of our country, though express against the action, rest in a state of dull torpidity, and tacitly allow every petty villain to violate them with impunity.

In this perturbed irresolute state of my mind, I cannot say whether I may be

subjugated to the ebullitions of my passion, or suffer the mild influence of religion and conscience finally to predominate. The subject is irksome, I shall leave it at present with the utmost indifference, and patiently wait the event. Man is often eccentric, and that eccentricity solely proceeds from the turbulence of passion not confined within the limits of prudence and discretion.

Having obtained permission to pay my addresses to the charming Olivia, I went to Bertram-Hall, with a full intention to seize the first opportunity of improving the slight impression which I was vain enough to imagine I had made on her youthful mind. Upon my arrival, and not finding her with Sir Robert and Lady Bertram in the parlour, I actually had the assurance to enquire where she was. Lady Bertram smiled, and said, "I perceive, Mr. Wilton, " you are a vigorous assailant; I wish you " may not subdue the fortress in as short " a time, proportionably, as Mr. Fennell " hath

“hath been carrying on a tedious, unsuccessful siege, without being capable of making the least impression. I am certain if you deprive us of our lovely companion, you will deprive us of one of the greatest blessings that Heaven can confer upon us. But why should I grieve at the exigence which I know must one day happen? I remember, when I was young, it was the first wish of my heart to be married, and I verily believe it is so with every daughter of Eve.”

—“Pry’thee Pat,” said Sir Robert, laughing, “hold thy tongue; why wouldst thou display all the wishes and caprices of thy sex? If you proceed in this manner, you will teach Mr. Wilton how to win Olivia, and with your own artillery.”—“Pshaw, pshaw, Robert,” replied my Lady, “you remember how I plagued and tantalized you: though I had resolved to have you from the first, yet I was determined to play a few vagaries, before I surrendered up my liber-

“ty.” Here chucking Sir Robert under the chin, “You know I was a vixen (added she); —but, Mr. Wilton, you will find Olivia “in the garden.”—I looked at Sir Robert—he nodded his assent, and I left the room, smiling at Lady Bertram’s innocent freedom and cheerful familiarity.

I found the sweet object of my hopes sitting reading in a small alcove, shaded with the flaunting eglantine in full bloom. Its fragrance was agreeable, cheering, and exhilarating. So intent was she upon her book, that she never perceived me, as I walked along the verdant path, until I was directly before the entrance of the alcove. She looked up—she arose, at the same time saying, with a visible emotion, “Mr. “Wilton!”—A livelier bloom flushed upon her cheek—a soft confusion overspread her lovely countenance—her glistening eyes were cast upon the ground, and she stood like a statue fixed and motionless. I stood with my eyes rivetted upon her, while my heart beat in unison to the tumultuous

multuous throbbings of my breast. I had devised a thousand tender endearing expressions; but at present, so prevalent was my trepidation, I could not recollect one single sentence. She raised her eyes, and cast a glance upon me, as reproachful of my timid silence. The idea burst from my mind—the words trembled upon my tongue, but I found an utter incapacity to articulate them.

Is this, Benfield, to be in love? It is really painful; but such a pain as is mingled with an exquisite pleasure!

After this temporary pause, I laid my hand upon the book which she held in her's, yet opened, and said, "May I ask your indulgence, my dear Olivia, for this abrupt intrusion upon your solitary retirement?"—She replied, "I frequently retire here, to this sequestered arbour, to peruse any of my favourite authors."— "May I presume to enquire to what author you have been devoting your present moments?"—She held forth the

F 6

book

book to me—I took it—she heaved a sigh, as she gave it. It was Thomson, that poet of nature, that author of sensibility! The book was open at the pretty pathetic episode of Palemon and Lavinia.—I read, from an enthusiasm I always entertained for the tender simplicity of the story, the two first lines :

“ The lovely young Lavinia once had friends,

“ And fortune smil’d deceitful on her birth.”—

She clapped her hand upon the place, and exclaimed, “ O Wilton !”—She turned away her face—plucked the flowers from the woodbine, smelled to them, and wished to conceal her emotion.

As I found myself intimately concerned in every incident relative to her, I closed the book, took her hand, and, eagerly kissing it, tenderly enquired after the cause of her sudden exclamation. She said, “ Believe me, Mr. Wilton, I have a cause—
“ —my exclamation was involuntary—
“ one day, probably, you may know it—
“ at present enquire no farther.” I obeyed

ed her injunction, and repressed my curiosity.

Still holding her hand, I asked if she would indulge me in the pleasure of being seated, while I acquainted her with the feelings of my heart, already subject to her devotion, and explained whatever might seem mysterious in the letter which I had the presumption to convey to her hand. Without the least scruple or hesitation, she sat down; at the same time saying, “The explanation which you were so candid and ingenuous as to make to Sir Robert last night, he has kindly communicated to me this morning. I am now no longer at a loss to conceive the meaning of several expressions in your epistle, which before were altogether inexplicable. And so, Mr. Wilton, you have incurred your father’s displeasure, by absolutely refusing to be united to the daughter of Sir George Silvertop?”—“I have, my charming Olivia, I have dared to think for myself, and boldly
“overstep

“overstep the limits of passive obe-
 “dience, by which I have forfeited my fa-
 “ther’s protection, and plunged the most
 “amiable of mothers in the dreary gloom
 “of sorrow and distress. I fled to avoid
 “the shackles of matrimony with a lady
 “whom I could not love, and, by a pecu-
 “liar happiness in my untoward destiny,
 “have become a voluntary captive to
 “those accomplishments which I now
 “adore.”

Here, dropping upon my knees, I pres-
 sed her hand to my lips with an eagerness
 to which I had been hitherto a stranger—
 I fixed my eyes with a look of kindness
 and complacence upon her face, and
 fondly enjoyed her apparent confusion—
 she was silent—“Let me not arise from this
 “supplicating posture, without you con-
 “scend to honour my addresses with the
 “smile of approbation.”—She replied,
 “Mr. Wilton, arise; I cannot think of
 “vouchsafing you an answer while I be-
 “hold you in the posture of adoration; it
 “is

“ is not my due ; and, however custom
“ may have given it a sanction, I am apt
“ to believe that vanity, not wisdom, in
“ many of my sex, hath prompted them
“ to conclude, that the acceptance of such
“ a service is nothing more than the just
“ reward of their distinguished merit.”—
I arose, and, without interrupting her, sat
down by her.—She continued, “ Mr. Wil-
“ ton, though the few accomplishments
“ which my benevolent Creator hath en-
“ dowed me with, and which I have not
“ the vanity to suppose give me any pre-
“ eminence over the majority of my sex,
“ may have raised an honourable passion in
“ your bosom, what apology could you
“ make to the world, what answer to
“ your own conscience, what satisfaction
“ to your offended father, were you to be
“ so successful as to meet with a consum-
“ mation of your wishes ?”—I replied,
“ My dear Olivia, although in this in-
“ stance I have confessed my disobe-
“ dience in refusing to marry in confor-
“ mity

“mity to the dictates of parental authority, yet do not therefore conclude me so
“callous to all sense of filial duty, as that
“I would act so inconsiderately in so important a concern, as finally to conclude
“so interesting an affair without first imparting and earnestly soliciting the consent of my honoured parents. If that
“were ultimately refused, I should conclude
“myself acquitted before the tribunal of
“an impartial public, from the goad of
“my own conscience, and from the least
“disrespect to those whom religion and
“virtue teach me to revere.”—“But, Mr.
“Wilton, have you maturely weighed the
“consequences attendant on the completion of this pursuit?”—“Oh Olivia, do
“not conjure up imaginary impediments
“on this occasion, where probably too
“many real ones may actually exist. Do
“not add to my misery by enumerating
“obstacles which may never happen; and
“if they do, it is my duty to sustain with
“fortitude and resignation. Few incidents

“dents in life, even the most trivial,
“would be undertaken if we had the least
“presentiment of many of those unfortunate
“events which are the sure and certain
“consequence of them. Let us not, my
“dearest, embitter our present moments
“by indulging those gloomy phantoms
“which the fertility of Imagination may
“constantly pourtray, and which may
“corrode and disturb, though they never
“happen.”—“Is it not, Sir, expedient
“and a maxim of prudence to prepare
“for, if not prevent, the hapless contin-
“gencies of adversity?—since without such
“a preparation we shall seldom be enabled
“to meet those baleful strokes which nei-
“ther prudence could foresee nor caution
“prevent?”—“I acknowledge, Olivia,
“the justness of your observation—but
“why so solemn, so cautious at the com-
“mencement of a connection which I
“have the most ardent hope will finally
“terminate in happiness and peace?”—
putting my arm round her waist, and
gently

gently pressing her to my bosom—"What
 "wayward occurrence in this life can
 "ruffle my happiness, if I should be so
 "fortunate as to be blessed with the pos-
 "session of your affection!"—"Ah, Mr.
 "Wilton, you are not that novice in the
 "world, not that utter stranger to the
 "manners of the times, as really to con-
 "clude, that the bare possession of my
 "affection would be a sufficient counter-
 "balance for the many uneasinesses, the
 "warping discontents, the gloom of sor-
 "row, and the gnawing stings of cool
 "neglect, which are constantly floating in
 "this temporary scene of casual exist-
 "ence."—"Yes, my angel, yes, a more
 "than sufficient consolation for the worst
 "that could befall me. At present, you
 "know, I am a poor alien, estranged
 "from the tenderness and care, the in-
 "dulgence and kind attentions of my
 "parents, cast upon the world as un-
 "worthy of their notice and undeserving
 "of their protection. In this forlorn and
 "hopeless

“hopeless condition permit me, oh Olivia, permit me to pour my sorrows into your bosom, as a gentle asylum, where they may experience some relief, and repose in confidence of a total alleviation.”—“Indeed, Henry, you may be deceived; happiness is not always acquired even by the accomplishment of those very means which we often and vainly suppose to be solely productive of this ideal phantom.”—“Call happiness not ideal, Olivia, it is a reality, and what can deprive me of it if you deign to bless me with your love?”—Here, sighing, she made an attempt to arise, while I tenderly enfolded her in my arms.—This instantaneous motion being unacceptable to me, I eagerly said, “My Olivia, why will you leave me?” She confusedly replied, “Look there”—when lo! Sir Robert and Lady Bertram were standing about half way along the verdant path which led directly to the alcove where we were sitting. Lady Bertram
had

had one arm through Sir Robert's, and with the other she was pointing with her finger to us, whilst she was shaking and trembling with an immoderate fit of laughter.

We arose—Olivia walked from me by another path, whilst Lady Bertram called after her, and seemingly enjoyed her confusion.

The interruption was unwelcome and unseasonable; the mirth and hilarity of Lady Bertram, at present, I had no relish for. After a few turns round the garden, I took my leave, meditating on the happiness resulting from the idea that the lovely Olivia did not receive me with the coolness of indifference.

Oh Benfield, she is loveliness itself. She is rather above the middle size, small and slender, yet delicately and finely proportioned. Her face is inclining to an oval—her complexion fair, with a lively tinge upon her cheek of the crimson blush—her eyes are blue, soft, mild and expressive—her countenance cheerful, animated and
engaging

engaging—her hair an agreeable auburn, which hangs waving over her shoulders in curling ringlets, without powder. She was dressed in white, a colour which I thought peculiarly adapted to her complexion; and when she moved or spoke, I fancied it added a grace to the native dignity of her person. You will say, this is a portrait of a lover. It is so; it may be exaggerated, and somewhat enlivened by my partiality for the original; yet, I assure you, it is a striking resemblance, and one day you may be capable of recognizing the justness of the drawing.

However this connexion may terminate, I find myself involved in the pleasurable intricacies of a pure, disinterested love. My hopes are warm and ardent, and since my late interview, where my reception was coincident with my wishes, I see nothing but uninterrupted happiness and perpetual joy. I dare not once think, in the rapture of my imagination, on the family at Wilton-Park, lest I should embitter
my

my present moments by the tediousness of reflection and the anxiety of recapitulation.

There are many events in life whose original and progress appear to the thinking individual pregnant with disaster and loaden with calamity; yet, contrary to expectation, and their immediate effect, they have been ultimately productive of the greatest good; and disseminated joy and plenty, pleasure and abundance, where grief and solicitude, penury and want, were concluded their inseparable attendants. From examining the concatenation of causes and effects, I am ardent enough to cherish the hope, that my present alienation, though originally teeming with evil, brought me involuntarily to the banks of the Wansbeck, where I may acquire a compensation which will confirm me, through life, happy and contented.

I am, &c.

LET-

LETTER XXXIII.

FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME.

SIR,

THAT settled gloom of melancholy which had long taken an uncontrolled possession of my mind, begins now to disperse, and a more pleasing prospect opens upon my expectation. Lately I saw nothing before me but wretchedness and anxiety, with the direful imprecation of an enraged father behind, gnawing with incessant solicitude, and preying, with a rankling poisonous impression, on every moment of my existence. At this instant of time, I am all vivacity, all cheerfulness and rapture. I am perched on the highest pinnacle of expectation, almost confident of success, and of one day being happy in the uninterrupted possession of my dear Olivia.

What

What extasy, what inconsideration, Benfield, is here ! Though I have explicitly delineated my present feelings, yet cool Reflection, like a ravenous vulture, comes with an impetuous torrent over the rapturous conceptions of my placid mind, and damps every moment of my joy with the gall of bitterness and the gloom of sorrow.

O father, father, thou honourable name ! thou dear relation who gavest me being, what would I not give, what would I not sacrifice, to have your venerable sanction, to be blessed with your approbation, and have your ready permission to pursue and finally complete this action, to which I am wholly devoted, and in which my happiness is absolutely involved !

I am sanguine in my hopes, yet how many incidents may intervene, which may counteract all my designs, render all my schemes abortive, and leave me a miserable object of ridicule, to lament over my hapless disappointment ! It is an
un-

unpardonable folly for the most presumptuous child of humanity to place his sole happiness on the fortunate completion of any single occurrence, since a very trivial intervention may destroy what the utmost attention may never be able to re-establish. So Reason dictates, but Love and Reason are seldom associates.

To save myself the trouble of further recollection, I walked forth. The cool and tranquil pleasures of the country were ever agreeable to me, and I felt their enjoyment at present with peculiar delight. The mild, the gentle beauties of the spring had given place to the more vivid and enlivening colours of summer, that now reigned in meridian glory. The herbage was exuberant, enamelled with a thousand dyes, more rich, more variegated, and infinitely more lively than all the borrowed glitter and pageantry of the most superb ball-night. The innumerable tints of a thousand wild flowers, all blended and softened by a variety of light and shade, gave

an exquisite and inexpressive harmony to the natural picture. The meadows were waving with luxuriance, and seemed to invite the sun-burnt hand of the mower. The trees were clad in their fullest foliage, whose verdant and cooling shade was inviting and agreeable, from the sultry rays of the almost vertical and glorious luminary of the day.

Contemplating and enjoying these rural beauties, I arrived at the place where my pretty songster had built his habitation, and, silently examining, I found the little family were gone. Uncertain of their fate, whether robbed by the pilfering hand of the wandering school-boy, or hopping from spray to spray beneath the gentle auspices of their enraptured parents, I stopped and listened for his mellow note.—I stopped and listened in vain—his note was mute—the melody of his music no more re-echoed and made vocal the banks of the Wanbeck. “Pretty warbler!” I exclaimed; “how emblematical of my
“father!”

“father! Bereft of thy offspring, perhaps
 “thou mournest on some solitary bough, and
 “pinest out the day for thy irreparable
 “loss!”—I heard the shrill flecker of their
 wings—I looked round, and espied upon
 the hawthorn the two parent birds, ac-
 companied with their young progeny.
 “Happy birds,” said I, “may your flight
 “be ominous !

Think not, Benfield, I am in the least
 tinctured with the gloom of superstition;
 yet this little incident of perceiving them
 at liberty, when I was in suspense for
 their destiny, gave a relief to my mind,
 and dispelled that anxiety which I har-
 boured for their safety.—In these trifling
 observations, these unentertaining reflec-
 tions, I found inexpressible delight. When
 the mind is absorbed in difficulty, and
 impressed with the heavy load of adver-
 sity, many a trifling incident will create
 an entertainment, and diffuse a transient
 gleam of joy, which at other hours of

peace and leisure would pass by unnoticed and unobserved.

In passing through the park, I was struck with the rotundity and magnificence of a very large plane-tree, and stopped to indulge my admiration. Its bole was enormous, and its branches rose in a regular conical figure to an amazing height. The day was warm, I was somewhat fatigued with walking, and the cool shade was inviting. I threw myself down upon the verdant turf, with an intention of amusing myself with the perusal of my favourite Horace. I opened the volume at that beautiful Ode which begins, *Integer vitæ, scelerisque purus*, and had scarcely got through the second stanza, when I was accosted by Mr. Longford's well-known voice, asking, "Where is Olivia?" I calmly answered, "I do not know, Sir." He fixed his eyes stedfastly on me, with a wildness in his look, and a terror in his countenance, which startled and alarmed me. After a little pause, he said, "You marry
"Olivia,

“Olivia, who has been betrothed to
“me these two years!—She often sits and
“reads under this tree.—Happy tree! here
“it was I first saw her.—Pray, Sir, in-
“form me where she is: Lady Bertram
“told me she was in the park.—Charles
“the Second saved himself in an oak—
“But Mr. Fennell may not have told the
“truth—I will not yet believe him, for
“she is not here.”

At this he walked from me, with a
hasty step. Being disconcerted with the
strangeness of his manner and the inco-
herence of his expressions, I shut my
book, arose, and walked after him to-
wards Bertram-Hall.

I found him in the parlour with Sir
Robert and Lady Bertram, enquiring
with much earnestness for his dear Olivia.
Sir Robert looked seriously, first at his
Lady, then at me, and, addressing himself
to Mr. Longford, said, “I assure you,
“Sir, Olivia walked out above an hour
“ago. You are very conscious I can

“have no motive to deceive you.”—
“Deceive me!” replied Mr. Longford,
“deceive me, Sir Robert! no, no, no.
—I wish we were married—but, Lady
Bertram, you have often laughed when
I have expressed my desire—Pray, Sir,”
addressing himself to me, “you do not
mean to become my rival?—Cease, cease,
your intention is in vain—Return, re-
turn, Northumberland will not be
cozened by a stranger.”

Here he walked with alacrity across the floor, sometimes twirling his cane with much dexterity, sometimes gnawing it with his teeth, and frequently eyeing me with a wild indignant glance, which moved my pity, and I silently commiserated the apparent perturbation of his mind.

Sir Robert desired him to be seated.
“—No, no,” Sir Robert, “you en-
courage strangers—My estate is a
good one—my rents are well paid—
then what have I to fear!—Yet a wo-
man

“man is a slippery article, and few men
“can hold an eel by the tail.—Desde-
“mona did not use her Moor too faith-
“fully; witness the bloody handkerchief—
“Trust, trust—Mr. Wilton, you will not
“tell me a lye?”—“Not willingly, Mr.
“Longford.”—“Of what amount is your
“rent-roll?”—“As yet I have no estate, Sir;
“my father is still living, and long may
“he enjoy it!”—“Enough, enough,”
exclaimed he with much exultation, “two
“thousand pounds a year against nothing,
“Lady Bertram, is great odds—Victory,
“thou art yet my own—Mr. Wilton,
“you are a fallen star.”

His loquacity was incessant, and I thought my presence, from the supposition of my being a rival, might irritate his present perturbation: under this impression I took my leave and walked toward the Vicarage, to wait upon Mr. Brooke.

I was followed by Sir Robert. He overtook me, and said, “I am sorry to
“observe

“ observe the increasing malady of poor
 “ Mr. Longford. He teazes Olivia, who,
 “ through mere good-nature, and in confi-
 “ deration of his unhappy infirmity, bears
 “ with his officiousness, and suffers with
 “ a laudable patience all his wandering
 “ inconsistencies.”

“ Pray, Sir Robert, how long has he been
 “ afflicted with this mental derangement ?”

“ I have known him, Mr. Wilton,
 “ from his childhood. From what
 “ cause this infirmity might originate
 “ is uncertain, for his childhood was
 “ marked with many eccentricities. As
 “ he advanced towards maturity, I
 “ thought at different times his con-
 “ duct was chequered with many od-
 “ dities, his behaviour with inconsisten-
 “ cies, and his conversation with incohe-
 “ rence. These observations were my own,
 “ and I was tender in indulging them.

“ About two years ago he saw Olivia at
 “ an assembly, and became her captive.
 “ His addresses she immediately and pe-
 “ remptorily

“ remptorily refused; upon which he dis-
 “ continued his visits, confined himself
 “ closely to his room, and sunk into the
 “ deepest melancholy. As soon as I was
 “ informed of his pitiable case, I paid
 “ him a visit, endeavoured to revive his
 “ spirits by all the methods I could de-
 “ vise, and told him Olivia should call
 “ upon him, if he would promise to come
 “ and dine at Bertram-Hall. After much
 “ solicitation he complied. Olivia, in
 “ company with Lady Bertram and my-
 “ self called a few days after. He seemed
 “ more cheerful and more collected than
 “ when I saw him the preceding week. The
 “ goodness of Olivia’s heart needed no
 “ instruction. She was all attention to
 “ her unfortunate lover, and bore his civi-
 “ lities and his weaknesses with that gen-
 “ tleness and decorum which manifestly
 “ indicated the amiability of her dispo-
 “ sition.

“ From this time his melancholy began
 “ to disperse, and he gradually assumed a

“loquacious vivacity, which is frequently
 “a little irksome, but, considering his
 “weakness, never disgusting. His at-
 “tentions have been invariable, and he
 “hath long entertained the opinion that
 “he is to be married to Olivia. Under
 “this delusive impression, his sollicita-
 “tions are sometimes rather troublesome,
 “and Mr. Fennell, through a malicious
 “motive, hath informed him, that you
 “are going to deprive him of his be-
 “loved mistress. Hence his anxiety and
 “agitation, his inquisitiveness and incre-
 “dulity this morning.”

Sir Robert ceased, when I replied,
 “His misfortune, Sir,—a derangement
 “of the intellectual powers—is the most
 “melancholy and pitiable that can afflict
 “the human species. The more I reflect
 “upon the amiable condescension of Oli-
 “via in permitting his assiduities, the
 “more I admire, and praise her.”

We arrived at the Vicarage, and upon
 our entrance into the parlour were struck
 with

with a scene of sorrow enough to soften the most obdurate heart. Mr. Brooke was sitting, grief and melancholy depicted upon his countenance, with his second son, my pretty little cowslip-gatherer, stretched at length upon his knee. Pale was the bloom upon his cheek, and dull was the lustre of his eye—the Angel of Death seemed to have touched him with his mortal wand—he lay cold and motionless.

Mr. Brooke, with all the feelings of a tender father, was weeping over his child. As we entered, the good man wished to conceal his grief—his attempt was in vain—the glistening tears coursed down his cheeks, and bedewed the face of his dear babe, now insensible to their moisture. His other little son was leaning upon his knees, weeping and kissing his almost lifeless brother—and saying, “No, indeed, papa, my brother William shall not die”—and again he kissed his pallid lips. Close by Mr. Brooke sat my dear Olivia, lovely in her

grief.—She was attempting to administer consolation to the sorrowful father, though her eyes were surcharged with the liquid torrent, and her tongue faltered in its friendly office. “My pretty William,” said she, “Sir Robert, is seized with a fever — Feel his pulse—it is flying—My “pretty cherub!”—She could utter no more, but turned away her face and gave vent to her sorrow.

I felt the sympathy of the general grief, and, stepping to the lovely mourner, wiped the tears from her eyes, and wished to alleviate her woe for her little companion, while Sir Robert kindly endeavoured to console the afflicted father.

In the mean time Mrs. Brooke entered, and without taking any notice of the danger of the child, or the general sorrow which had overspread every countenance, said, “Indeed, Mr. Brooke, you are to blame to grieve thus immoderately; the child will be better to-morrow—lay him on the bed.”—“No, Mrs. Brooke, here
“ let

“let him lie—I will feel when the last cold
“touch seizes upon his cheek—I will shut
“his closing eye—and on my lips receive
“his parting breath—then, if you please,
“we will lay him for the last time upon
“his bed.” Here the good man kissed his
child and wept. There was not a dry cheek
in the room, except Mrs. Brooke’s, who
said, with much indifference, “Thus, Sir
“Robert, it is always with Mr. Brooke,
“who pretends to know better what to
“do with the children than I do, who am
“their mother.”—“Hush, hush,” replied
Sir Robert, “have you sent for any
“advice?”—“I expect the physician every
“minute,” said Mr. Brooke.—The phy-
sician entered. He examined the child,
and I confess to you I have seldom felt
more anxiety than I did at this present
moment for the fate of the sweet little
creature.

Upon enquiry, he gave us hopes of his
recovery, and desired that he might be
put to bed. “There, there,” cried the
good

good wife, "Mr. Brooke, you will never take my advice, although you see I am always in the right."—The little patient was put to bed. His elder brother would not quit him, but, with all the tenderness and affection imaginable insisted on sleeping with him. Pretty cherubs! may your affection increase with your years, and terminate only with your existence!

It was now expedient for us to retire. I solicited Olivia for the pleasure of a walk in the park—she hesitated, without the permission of Sir Robert—and this I soon obtained. We separated; Sir Robert walked home to keep Mr. Longford company, while Olivia and I went to enjoy the pleasures of retirement beneath the shadowy covert of a row of branching pines.

I am, &c.

L E T.

L E T T E R XXXIV.

FROM MR. BENFIELD TO THE HON.
MR. WILTON.

DEAR SIR,

AFTER the receipt of the last letter from my beloved Antonet, the minutes seemed to go creeping forward, and with all the solicitude of an impatient lover I anxiously counted the striking of every hour. Sensible of my own impatience, and chiding the folly which could thus encourage it, to my inexpressible torment I drawled away the time in indolence and expectation, till near the hour when I deemed it requisite to equip myself.

In this interval the many wild imaginations which took possession of my brain, the chimerical redundancies which occupied my unsettled thoughts, all contributed,

buted, in some degree, to waste the most precious of all possessions, time, until the intervening moments were elapsed.

Were it possible for me to describe, or had you patience to read, what I projected and devised, we might hereafter laugh very heartily at the frivolity of that head which could find no better employment. I assure you, my vagaries, though wild and fantastical, were agreeable and pleasing. It is neither uncommon nor incredible for an active mind to be more delighted with these imaginary fancies than with the real enjoyment. But this was not my case. The long-expected hour arrived, when I was to be accoutred in a manner to which I had hitherto been unaccustomed. I had entrusted an old confidential servant with my important secret, who readily engaged to furnish me from the surplus of his own wardrobe with whatever I deemed necessary. An old flouch hat, a half-worn drab coloured furtout coat, a blue plush waistcoat, and a pair
of

of dirty leather breeches, formed the dress in which I was to make this honourable campaign.

According to my orders, my servant had the horses ready by three o'clock at the appointed place, when passing privately through my garden, I mounted and rode by the nearest way to Wilton-Wood. When about half a mile distant from the cottage I alighted, and ordered him to take the horses back to a little ale-house which we had passed, and to meet me again precisely at seven. He promised punctuality and departed.

Musing and alone, I entered the Wood. Whether from consciousness of my transformation, from a want of rectitude in my present proceeding, or from whatever other motive it might result, I am not able clearly to deduce, yet I felt a certain trepidation of mind to which I had long been a stranger. The rustling of the leaves, the creaking of the branches, the sudden flutter of a startled bird, made

made me even quake, and listen with an unusual tremor.

As I advanced farther into the Wood, this timidity abated, and I arrived at last at the welcome cottage. Upon enquiry, I was informed the ladies had not been there, and, examining my watch, perceived I had anticipated the appointed time full half an hour. The owner of the little mansion desired me to walk in, saying, "The ladies will be here presently." I looked attentively upon her, when she continued, "Be not surprized, Sir, that I know who you are, and the nature of your errand; for Lady Wilton sent me word to day, that she and my sweet lovely child would be here this evening at five o'clock, requesting I would not give admittance to any one but Mr. Benfield, and who would probably come disguised." I thanked the good woman for her civility, and walked in. She was liberal and profuse in the praises of her lady and child; and though she chatted away,

without

without intermission, upon her favourite topic, so much was I absorbed in the contemplation of my adventure, that I hardly remember one syllable distinctly of all she delivered.

At last a rap was heard at the door. —I started from my reverie with an emotion and alacrity as if I were springing from the bite of the mortal adder. Before I was in the least recovered, Lady Wilton and my lovely Antonet entered. “I see,” said your mother, smiling, “Mr. Benfield, you are punctual to a minute.” —“Yes, Madam,” paying my obeisance to her, at the same time taking my charmer by the hand, “punctuality to an assignation is nothing more than what is due, when so much merit and perfection condescend to meet my attention.” —“Compliments,” said Antonet, “Mr. Benfield, are to me unnecessary, because unmerited. Truth is always a welcome visitor, except where vanity reigns supreme in the female mind.” —“Vanity, my

“ my Antonet, I am very confident,
“ is not predominant in your mind, or
“ in the least characteristic of your ge-
“ neral behaviour.” — “ Come, come,”
said Lady Wilton, “ time is precious, let
“ not one moment of it be unnecessarily
“ wasted in unmeaning complimentary
“ expressions. There is behind the cot-
“ tage a snug little garden, close-fenced
“ with a hawthorn hedge; thither you
“ may retire for an hour. I will in the
“ mean time amuse myself with Jane’s
“ devotional books, while she walks to
“ and fro in the path that leads directly
“ to Wilton-Park, by which she will be
“ able to give us intelligence, if she espy
“ any one, of whom she is suspicious,
“ coming towards the Wood. Every pre-
“ caution to prevent detection is necessary;
“ and as such an interview cannot with
“ propriety be repeated, I hope the pre-
“ sent will elude even the eyes of sus-
“ picion.”

She

She ceased. We bowed, and retired.

The garden was small, and well enclosed. In one corner was a seat, enwoven with woodbine and the wild briar, the roses of which were now in full blow, and shed an agreeable fragrance around this sequestered spot. Thither I led and seated my charming Antonet, and throwing my arms around her waist, pressed her to my panting bosom, and impressed a modest kiss upon her unreluctant lips. The ardour of my embrace and the unexpected salute covered her face with crimson, and threw her into a visible confusion; when casting a smile of sweetness and complacence upon me, she said, "Had
" not experience convinced me of your
" honour, my delicacy, Mr. Benfield,
" would not have suffered such familiari-
" ties."—"If, my angel, I have offended
" you by my freedom, let me intreat your
" forgiveness upon my knee, and let my
" unvarying love plead an exemption
" from your censure."—"Rise, Benfield,
" and

“and plead not to me for pardon. Such
“formalities are totally inconsistent with
“our attachment.”—“I hope, my Antonet,
“our attachment is founded upon
“on a surer basis than to be shaken by an
“embrace of innocence and affection.
“But oh Antonet, how long must I
“live in hope, how long be tormented
“with this miserable suspense? Why
“treat me with this constant cruelty?”—
“Say not so, Mr. Benfield; you are sufficiently
“apprized of my motive; I hope
“it is an honourable one. I have not
“concealed from you the very inmost
“recesses of my heart, but have made you,
“without the least hesitation, the confident
“of my thoughts, and the arbiter
“of all my actions. Then accuse me not
“of cruelty; it forms no part of my conduct
“towards you.”—“Can you then,
“my Antonet, in your goodness towards
“me, give me a definitive answer,
“how long I must live in this unhappy
“state of anxiety and absolute despair?
“In-

"Informed of this, I may look forward
 "with the transports of joy to the comple-
 "tion of a term which is to confirm my
 "earthly happiness."—"On this, Sir, I
 "am not able to determine; but were I at
 "liberty to bestow my hand where I have
 "long bestowed my heart, you should not
 "solicit in vain another hour."—"Heaven
 "bless my angel, and record her declara-
 "tion! What, O what restrains your pre-
 "sent liberty! Will the dull, tedious ce-
 "remony of still asking the consent of a
 "parent, who is determined to remain in-
 "flexible in his obstinacy, prevent you
 "from participating and conferring that
 "felicity which our union alone can
 "grant us?"—"Asperse not, Benfield,
 "the conduct of a man who is my pa-
 "rent; he gave me life, cherished my
 "helpless infancy, carefully led my un-
 "experienced years up to maturity, and
 "kindly indulged me in every wish, ex-
 "cept that which has long been an ene-
 "my to my peace."—"I have long, my
 "love,

“ love, been taught my duty from your
 “ lips, and am ever ready to assent to
 “ their dictates; but consent, let me once
 “ call you mine, and I will listen with the
 “ attention of a lover to all your instruc-
 “ tions, and daily bless you for your sweet
 “ condescension.”—Here again I pressed
 her to my bosom—stole a kiss from her
 ruby lips, and added, “Why, my Antonet,
 “ should we separate any more? Our
 “ hearts are already united; let us by a
 “ legal sanction join our hands, and taste
 “ of that happiness to which our con-
 “ stancy hath so well entitled us.” Here,
 by an involuntary motion, she rested
 her cheek against mine—I tenderly em-
 braced her, while she continued thus:
 “ My Benfield, I would—yes, I am willing
 “ to reward your constancy, could I meet
 “ your affection upon terms of equality,
 “ and bring myself to a resolution to part
 “ with my beloved parent. She knows
 “ the anguish of my mind—it has wrung
 “ her heart—but I shall leave her! vene-
 “ rable

“rable parent, forgive the thought ! Oh
“Benfield, cease the request—leave her !”
Her utterance stopped—I felt the warm
tears come trickling upon my cheek—I
kissed them away as they fell—she sobbed
deeply.

To see the dear object of all my wishes
in this agony was more than I could
bear—I caught the infection, and poured
my sorrows into her bosom : she looked
up and perceived my agitation ; then
throwing her arms around me, said, “Oh
“Benfield, this is too much—dry up your
“tears. I am and will be your’s.” This
kind declaration did not relieve me—I
answered with a tender embrace, and rested
my head upon her bosom.

Thus silent and weeping were we sur-
prised by Lady Wilton, who said, with
the utmost tenderness, “My chil-
“dren, why thus involved in sorrow ?”
I raised my head at the interrogation,
whilst Antonet turned her’s away, and
vainly attempted to conceal her blushes.

“ O Lady Wilton,” I returned, “ we are
“ miserable and unhappy—let us separate
“ no more—here upon my knees I soli-
“ cit your consent, which will terminate
“ a wretchedness that has long rendered
“ existence a burden.” Lady Wilton re-
plied, “ Rise, Mr. Wilton.—But what says
“ my Antonet? Does your heart join in
“ this petition for my consent?”—“ My
“ honourable parent, you have long known
“ the wishes of my heart.”—“ Then, my dear
“ children, may the God of Mercies bless,
“ keep, and make you happy! May his
“ providence protect you through this
“ weary pilgrimage of life, and may you
“ be as happy as the hopes of a tender
“ mother can wish you!” Here, taking
my angel by the hand, we both dropped
upon our knees, and thanked her for her
maternal benediction.

The scene, Wilton, was affecting—I
saw the struggle of your parent to conceal
her emotion; and whilst the tear stood
glistening in her eye, she said, “ My
“ children,

“ children, we must part—the evening
“ steals upon us.”—“ Part ! Madam,” ex-
claimed I, “ no, never more.”—“ It is in-
“ dispensably requisite, Mr. Benfield ; my
“ reasons are many and various—you shall
“ know them to-morrow. In the mean
“ time, measures may be concerted by
“ which your union may be facilitated
“ without the dread of a discovery. A
“ few days can make little difference, and
“ matters are not yet fully matured for
“ the completion of your desires.” I ta-
cily assented to her commands, from a
conviction that she was much more ca-
pable of determining what was expedient
in this exigence than myself, and after
a mutual interchange of unfeigned civi-
lities we separated once more.

I am, &c.

H 2

LET.

L E T T E R XXXV.

FROM MR. BENFIELD TO THE HON.
MR. WILTON.

DEAR SIR,

I BEGIN now to think that my affection will be rewarded, and my unwearied constancy crowned with success. You know how indefatigable I have been in the perseverance of my attachment to your amiable sister, who having in vain tried by time and ineffectual solicitation to soften the obduracy of her parent, and to gain his acquiescence to her inclination, seems at last resolved to act in her own cause with vigour, and to do herself that justice which a father denies her, without assigning any other reason than an unwarrantable obstinacy. In this resolution

tion may propitious Heaven confirm and establish her! The sacrifice she has at length determined to make, I hope, will never be repented of. It shall be my constant care through life to soothe the anxiety of her days, and dispel the sorrow which may embitter her sleepless nights.

Anxiety and sorrow, in a certain degree, is the portion of every child of mortality; I am not therefore so presumptuous as to suppose we shall be blessed with a particular exemption. But it is our duty, whenever the blighting touch of woe dispels our present peace, to bear without a sullen murmur whatever chastisement Providence may inflict.

In pursuance of your honourable mother's cautions last night, I repaired as before to the Cottage in the Wood, where I received the two following letters, which I have carefully transcribed, in order to preserve the originals.

150 THE DENIAL; OR,

FROM THE HON. LADY WILTON TO
MR. BENFIELD.

SIR,

I HAVE weighed maturely your proposal, and, being confident of the impracticability of obtaining Lord Wilton's consent, have informed my dear child, that she has my acquiescence to complete her happiness, whenever she has fortitude to put it in execution.

The duty and tenderness of my Antonet have been so conspicuous, and so often manifested, to the alleviation of my sorrows, that no temporal consideration should have induced me to comply with your solicitation at this time, and sanction a measure which separates me from the child of my affections. But I have long seen the rose fade upon her cheek, and the lively glow of health which sparkled in her eye grow dim and faint,

faint. That cheerful flow of spirits which always distinguished her, and made her the agreeable companion, has long ago forsaken her, and all her vivacity is now forced, and evaporates in the attempt. I was no stranger to the sensibility of her heart, and daily watched for opportunities to convince her that I was not inimical to the softness of her propensity. By such a conduct I gained her entire confidence, and such an ascendancy over her, that she opened to me, without reserve, the recesses of a heart capable of the firmest friendship and the tenderest love. She has long devoted her attention to the mitigation of my anxieties, whilst I have contributed to the alleviation of her's. The conflict between her duty and affection hath been strenuous and lasting; but, alas! her tender frame can no longer support such convulsive efforts, and she must inevitably sink beneath the impending trial. This fatal truth has compelled me to coincide

with your urgent wishes, and willingly to give her to your arms, rather than see her drop by a slow but certain gradation into the dreary regions of the grave, a cold companion for the solitary worm.

Then, Benfield, take her, and may the just God of Heaven bless you with her! And that my dear Antonet may be more happy in her earthly union than ever her parent experienced, shall be the morning and evening prayer of

L. W.

FROM THE HON. MISS WILTON TO MR.
BENFIELD.

DEAR BENFIELD,

AFTER a severe struggle between my duty and affection, the latter hath prevailed, and I am now fully determined to bid adieu to Wilton-Park, and place myself under the protection of the man on whom my affections have been long fixed. The present behaviour of my father is actually intolerable,
and

THE HAPPY RETREAT.

and would compel the meekest spirit to resistance. Whatever motive may stimulate him to treat his unoffending family with such unbecoming severity, I am unable to divine; but there is certainly some strange secret lurking in his breast, which will prompt him to carry his revenge towards my unfortunate brother beyond the limits of moderation or decency.

I urge not this as a palliative for my disobedience. I have considered, and I know the consequence. Will you not, Benfield, one day reproach me for my temerity, and brand my affection to you with a want of duty to my parent? This would add a sting to my aching heart, already torn and convulsed with the pangs of nature and the soft attractions of all-subduing love. But I will confide in your solemn assurances of unalterable affection, and trust to that source for an alleviation of every misery. I have long, solely for my unvarying attachment to

H 5

you,

you, been familiar with rebuke, and accustomed to insult, from an authority I never questioned, and whose dictates to me were received as the irrefragable conclusions of the most sacred laws. I lived in hope, and vainly expected that time would ameliorate what it could not entirely relieve. I have been disappointed; wherefore, although I have long wavered, I have at length determined, and shall endeavour to seek that happiness from which I have been long an alien.

My dear mother and I were much terrified last night after our return from the Wood, under an apprehension that my father had discovered our affignation, as a few minutes after our return we received a summons to attend him in the parlour. The perturbation of our minds would have led to an immediate discovery, had he harboured any suspicion of our culpability, and it was some time before our fears subsided.

As

As soon as we were seated, my father, addressing himself to my mother, said, "Madam, I have not for some time past troubled you with any interrogatories relative to our ungrateful son, who, to add to his disobedience, hath never thought proper to acquaint me with the place of his retreat. From your apparent tranquillity, the visible composure of your mind, I am apt to conclude that you are apprized of what I want to know; I therefore request you to inform me where I can direct a letter to him, as I have some business of the utmost importance to transact with him."—"Pray, my Lord," replied my mother, "what induces you to form such a conclusion?"—"A truce with your quibbles, Madam, and proceed to a plain answer of a plain question; do you or do you not know where Henry is? Let not your boasted veracity forsake you in this instance, but speak without any equivocation." My mother

H 6

answered,

answered, "You are too hasty, my Lord,
" in stopping me thus abruptly, without
" hearing what I was going to say. I did
" not mean to quibble, nor yet to equivo-
" cate, but to tell you in plain terms, I
" know where he is, and am happy to know
" he is in health."—My father answered,
" And so, Madam, you have carried on a
" correspondence with our undutiful boy
" ever since his departure, without once
" acknowledging this infraction of your
" duty?"—"You are mistaken, my Lord,
" and might have omitted your censure
" of my swerving from my duty."—"Mis-
" taken!" exclaimed he, "how! You
" acknowledge you know where he is; and
" how came you to acquire this know-
" ledge, if not by an epistolary corre-
" spondence?"—"You may credit my
" assertion, my Lord, that I have never
" received one letter from him, or even
" a verbal message, since his departure."
"—Then, Antonet, you must be the me-
" dium through which your mother's in-
" telligence

“telligence comes.”—“Believe me, my Lord, I have not been favoured with one syllable from him since he left Wilton-Park.”—“No! hum.”—After a sudden pause, he said, “Inform me then by what channel you have your information.”—“That, my Lord, I will readily do, if you will inform me of the nature of the business.”—“No terms, Madam: I insist on your information unconditionally, and then, as my business is not of such a private nature but you may know of it, I shall probably acquaint you with it.”—“The channel by which we have our information is Mr. Benfield.”—“Benfield! Ha! Antonet, still a traitor to my authority! I supposed that connection finally annihilated.”

My disorder and emotion almost deprived me of reflection; for I had nearly attempted an apology, which a moment's recollection totally banished, and shewed me the absurdity of such a procedure.

My

My father observed my confusion, and eyed me with a smile of ineffable contempt.

My mother then acquainted him with Henry's place of residence. "Now, Madam, I shall inform you of my business with him. His disobedience in opposing my will has so alienated him from my affection, that I purpose to deprive him of his paternal inheritance—Nay, start not, Madam, I am determined—I have consulted the first legal authority, and altho' some impediments intervene, which may be removed without his acquiescence, yet as his consent will expedite the business, I mean to make him an offer of ten thousand pounds for it, upon his finally relinquishing all future claim to the paternal estate."—"You are not serious, my Lord?"—"Serious and determined, Madam, and shall immediately send him my proposal, which if rejected, let him abide by the consequences." Saying this, he left us staring

staring upon one another with the utmost astonishment and consternation.

After a silence of some seconds, my honoured parent said, "A gleam of hope
 " breaks in upon my mind, and dissipates
 " that sullen gloom which this abomi-
 " nable resolution had cast upon it. So
 " inveterate is his father's revenge
 " against my unhappy son, that were it
 " practicable to break the entail without
 " his acquiescence, I am confident Lord
 " Wilton would never condescend to
 " consult him. I hope therefore that my
 " son, from a regard to the antiquity of
 " his family, as well as to his own honour
 " and dignity, will never make so dishonour-
 " able a sacrifice for the paltry considera-
 " tion of ten thousand pounds. I will im-
 " mediately acquaint him with my thoughts
 " upon the subject; and, lest he should
 " hesitate, dissuade him, if possible, from
 " so base and degenerate a compliance."—
 I replied, "Your conduct on this occasion
 " is laudable and praise-worthy; yet, if you
 " recollect

“recollect, Mr. Benfield carries on a
“constant correspondence with Henry. I
“will to-morrow acquaint him with your
“sentiments, by which means you may
“hereafter be exculpated from the charge
“of influencing Henry’s determination,
“who, I am confident, will reject the
“proposal with the utmost disdain.”—“My
“dear child, I will follow your advice;
“it is not likely you will be long here
“to give it—You have a friend—but to
“whom shall I complain?—I have al-
“ready made up my mind for your hap-
“piness, I will not therefore disturb it
“by any feminine complaints.”

On Thursday evening, at eight o’clock,
accompanied only by my maid, I will
meet you in the Wood behind the Cottage.
Let our conveyance to Scotland be as ex-
peditious as possible, and in our return
we will surprise Henry in his hermitage
on the banks of the Wansbeck. I have
not even acquainted Sophy with my reso-
lution, lest by a denial she might incur
her

her father's hatred. Write no more, but
be punctual to the assignation of

Your ever faithful

A. WILTON.

Thus, Wilton, you see you are likely to have visitants sooner than you expected from this country. Ten thousand pounds! a poor equivalent indeed for a title and a large estate! Lady Wilton hath conjectured right; for if no impediments had occurred, you had never been acquainted with the business. This proposal seems to be the last resource of disappointed malice; But let the worst happen, my fortune and estate are at your command, to do yourself that justice which a father seems determined to deny you.

Until the receipt of this letter, I never knew what it was to be happy. Rejoice with me, for I will sign myself your fortunate brother

J. BENFIELD.

L E T.

L E T T E R XXXVI.

FROM MR. BENFIELD TO THE HON. MR.
WILTON.

DEAR WILTON,

I AM at this present moment confined to my chamber, wounded, disappointed, and overwhelmed with the utmost horror and confusion. The pain resulting from the wound in my shoulder is slight and trivial indeed, when compared to the excruciating torment I feel every moment, from the uncertainty of the fate of my beloved Antonet.

I concluded my last in rapture, and supposed that Fortune herself, however inauspicious, could not in so short a time have so completely and perfectly destroyed my happiness. I was miserably mistaken; and my former anxiety, which I suffered for
years,

years, was light in comparison of my present anguish.

After the receipt of the welcome letter which ordered me to be in readiness on the appointed evening at eight o'clock, I immediately began my preparations with the utmost alacrity and secrecy, not even acquainting one servant I have with the destination of his orders. Only to my venerable father I communicated my happiness, by shewing him your mother's and sister's letters, who cheerfully expressed his satisfaction by saying, "I now hope to see you blessed
" in the possession of an amiable partner
" before I go hence, and my evening sun
" set never more to rise. The happiest
" action of my closing life shall be to
" give you both a father's blessing; and if
" you prove as fortunate in your choice as
" I was, you will have sufficient cause to
" bless the day which gave Antonet Wil-
" ton to your arms."—He stopped, and I saw the glistening tear steal down his furrowed

furrowed cheek :—he hastily wiped it away, and observing my emotion said, “ My dear John, forgive me ; the recollection of former pleasures, of happy scenes, and of her who is gone before me, frequently melt me into tenderness and sorrow.” I consoled him with the expectation of some happy days which he had yet to enjoy in the company of his charming daughter. He shook his head, as significant of the futility of my prediction.

I then left him, and saw every thing with my own eyes immediately performed which I directed ; and so intoxicated was I with the coming bliss, that I requested the same thing to be done twice, thrice, or even more times, and was surprised when I was told they were done according to directions. I was all impatience, and thought Thursday never before so tardy. I walked to and fro, commanded and countermanded, and such was the agitation

tion of my mind, that no other subject could find the least admission.

The long wished-for day arrived. At three o'clock in the afternoon I ordered my own post-chaise with four horses to be put to immediately. My coachman and postilion were to drive us for the first stage, when we proposed to change horses, and to send my own horses home again. I then called my valet, and acquainted him with my design.—He smiled, and said, “I would give half a year’s wages to see Lord Wilton when he first misses his daughter.”—“Go, see if they are ready.” He returned in an instant and I followed.—Having entered the chaise, I ordered them to drive a different road than that which led directly to Wilton-Wood. Having by an easy pace exhausted nearly the intermediate time, we came to the north part of the Wood, nearly at half past seven, just behind the Cottage. Here I waited with that impatience, with that anxiety, which nothing but the most ardent passion

passion could experience, for near the the other half hour. When it was nearly expired, I walked into the Wood.—The evening was still and gloomy—the ebon shades of approaching night spread a horror through the darkened scene, which alarmed and almost chilled my fortitude. I approached the Cottage with the utmost silence, and heard nothing there except the shrill yelping of a little dog within. I rapped, and the door was immediately opened. I enquired if Miss Wilton were there, and was answered in the negative; at the same time the good woman expressed her surprise that Miss Wilton should be expected in the Wood, when the night was so near approaching. I wished to walk along the path which led to Wilton Park; but, being unacquainted with it, was afraid lest I might miss the road, and Antonet might arrive in my absence. I walked therefore into the Cottage, and waited a few minutes, which seemed to me as so many hours. I stepped to the door five times every five minutes; and such

such was my uneasiness at the supposed delay, that the mistress of the mansion expressed her surprise by saying, "I wish, Sir, your intention may be good to-night: I am afraid you expect my dear young Lady to carry her off; which if you do, you will break the good Lady Wilton's heart."—The little dog gave a solitary bark. I sprang to the door, and listened with the utmost attention, but nothing appeared. Again I walked in—the little centinel again gave warning with more eagerness than before—again I looked out—he ran along the path which led from the door—I followed him.—About one hundred yards from it I heard some footsteps—I ran forward with ardour; but what was my ecstasy, when I met my charming Antonet and her maid walking with a very quick pace towards the Cottage. I addressed her with rapture, when she said, "Oh Benfield, where is the carriage? I am fatigued and panting with walking so fast." I answered,

swered, "It is behind the Cottage." She asked me a variety of questions;—at what time I came to the Wood? how long I had waited? and such like, until we arrived at the door of our friendly little mansion. The mistress of it was there—she invited us in.—I objected—my Antonet said, "One minute will not delay us—let us have her blessing—Jane, I confide in your secrecy."—"My dear Lady, do not mistrust me, and may the God of Heaven bless you!—Oh Mr. Benfield, be kind to my child!"—she took hold of her hand, eagerly kissed it, and bedewed it with her tears.

My angel was dressed in a green habit, with a white hat and feather. I thought she never looked half so charming—her visible disorder—the rapid flow of her spirits, had spread a softness over her features which charmed and captivated.

Impatient to be gone, I took her by the hand, put my arm round her waist, and led her, not unwilling, to the spot where

where the carriage waited. All was silent—night was spreading her ebon mantle over the verdant surface, and covering every object with the gloom of darkness. We were come to the north hedge, which separated us from our conveyance, when a sudden rushing noise from the thicket alarmed us. “Alas, Benfield!” exclaimed my Antonet. I looked round with horror, bidding her not to be afraid.—In an instant the well-known terrific voice of Lord Wilton assailed our ears—“Stop, villain! where “is my daughter?” She screamed, and dropped senseless into my arms.—I wished to rush forward to the chaise, and bear my lifeless burden in my arms, but was immediately surrounded.—One, whom I could just distinguish to be Lord Wilton, endeavoured to force her from my arms. “Traitorous wretch,” exclaimed he, “quit your hold, or your life shall pay “the forfeit of your presumption;”—at the same instant presenting a pistol to my head. My servants, alarmed at the noise,

came rushing forward to the rescue of their master. My valet William coming up to me, and observing me supporting the lady in my arms, while Lord Wilton held a pistol to my forehead, threatening, with the most dreadful imprecations, to sacrifice my life to his wrath—William, in a fit of desperation, not aware of the consequences, struck Lord Wilton over the arm which held the pistol, with the heavy end of his whip. The force of the stroke lowered his arm; the pistol fired. I again attempted to force my way to the carriage with my lovely burden; but from an unusual weakness in my right arm I involuntarily let slip my hold, and she fell upon the grass. In rushing past Lord Wilton, I got a few paces from him; and at the instant that Antonet dropped from my arms, he fired his other pistol, I hope without injury to any individual present: then, and not before, I heard the shrill screams of a female voice, “Alas! my
“Lady, my murdered Lady!”—Lord
Wilton

Wilton and two others seized upon my lifeless Antonet, and were bearing her off, when William said, "Sir, where are your pistols? Let us not lose the prize thus." I attempted to feel for my pistols: my right arm was stiff, motionless, and painful. I walked up to Lord Wilton, and taking him by the arm with my left hand, said, "My Lord, your bloody purpose, I suppose, is disappointed—your forfeit life is now at my mercy—surrender me your daughter, or"—"Stand off, villain," said he, shoving me from him. I staggered—I thought I was very weak. Again I stopped him—again he pushed me from him with greater fury than before. I reeled and fell. Attempting to rise, I was utterly unable: I felt a most excruciating pain in my shoulder.—Whilst I lay upon the ground, I heard the noise of a dreadful scuffle, mixed with the most horrid oaths. I called to my servants, but I called in vain. After a few minutes the noise, I thought, came nearer. The

pain in my shoulder was now so acute, I put up my hand to feel where it was—my shirt was steeped in blood—I was seized with a giddiness, and supposed I was going to faint. At this instant my angel screamed out, “O Benfield, help, help!” Again I made an effort to rise, but was unable. The bustle approached me where I was lying: William had got possession of the well-contested prize, and was bearing her in his arms towards the carriage; whilst my coachman, a robust brawny fellow, supported by the postillion, was beating their assailants back, who seemed very timorous, and loth to come to a close rencounter. “Villains, traitors, cowards!” Lord Wilton kept bawling, “rescue my daughter--Were but my pistols charged!”—William said, “Here is the sweet Lady, “shall I place her in the carriage?”—“I thank you, William; I am afraid your “valour hath been exerted in vain—let “Lord Wilton have his daughter—his “rashness hath probably deprived me of
“life.”

“life.” His Lordship seized the lovely insensible creature, and instantly bore her off.

She was no sooner gone than shame, rage, and madness, threw me into a momentary stupefaction; during the continuance of which I was, by my servants, placed in the carriage, the jolting of which recovered my recollection, and I found myself supported by William. “Whither are we going?”—“To Benfield-Hall, Sir, as fast as we can drive.”

I remember nothing more that occurred during the remaining part of the road. My insensibility proceeded from the tumult of contending passions, the torment of pain, and the effusion of blood. When the carriage stopped, I asked where we were?—“At home, Sir.”—Lights being brought, I was lifted out of the carriage, and borne to my chamber. My venerable father met us in the passage, and seeing me carried by my attendants, cried out, “Alas, my son!”—Coming nearer, and perceiving me covered with

blood, he fell senseless by my side. The sight of a lifeless parent for a while suspended my torments, and I desired them to set me down, that they might attend to my father. He was instantly carried to his chamber.

I desired William to send for a surgeon with all imaginable speed.—“That is already done; for Robert, as soon as he alighted at the door, again remounted a fresh horse, and as he hath not above two miles to ride, we may soon expect his return.”—“Thanks, William, for your care. I hope I shall live to reward you for it.”

I was then removed to my chamber. William wished to have my coat and waistcoat taken off.—“Hold, let me know how my honoured father is, before you proceed any farther!”—He came in whilst I was speaking, pale and trembling. Taking hold of my hand, he said, “Alas, my son, is this your wedding-night? Is this the joy I promised myself from
“your

“ your union ! Had my aged limbs been
 “ mouldering in the grave before this had
 “ happened, I should have escaped some
 “ days of misery. Wretched old man !
 “ unfortunate son ! ” — His grief stopped his
 utterance, and he bathed my face with
 his tears. I could raise but one arm, with
 which I clasped him round the neck, and
 pressed his venerable face to mine. Thus
 enlocked in the embraces of my afflicted
 parent, who poured his sorrows into my
 bosom, my own found a passage. The sur-
 geon was announced — I requested my at-
 tendants to remove my father to another
 room, during the examination of the
 wound. He said, “ No, John, not so ; no
 “ power shall remove me from your bed-
 “ side until I know the worst ; the sooner
 “ I know it the better.”

I desired the surgeon to proceed. He
 began to undress me, but was obliged to
 cut away the sleeve of my coat, as my
 arm could not be moved. My loss of

blood seemed to alarm him—my clothes were drenched in it. Upon probing the wound the ball was found lodged in it, which, he said, must be immediately extracted. I told him, I was prepared for the operation. “Pray, Sir,” said my father, “inform me faithfully, do you apprehend any danger from the wound?” —“I hope not, Mr. Benfield; compose yourself and retire.” He obeyed.

Mr. Lambton then proceeded to the operation; for Robert having informed him of the accident, he had come properly prepared. The extraction of the ball was soon performed—the wound was dressed, and I was laid carefully in bed. I got no rest, but was seized with a strong delirium through the night, which abated in the morning, when I fell into a composed and refreshing sleep.

Such, Wilton, has been the first day of my intended marriage. A day which I vainly deemed the happiest in my life hath proved the

the most unfortunate. I feel not for myself—I totally forget my own pain, when I think on the fate of my dear suffering angel.—But yet I will hope; for though the surgeon shakes his head, and looks wond'rous *grave*, I believe I shall rise again, though I find myself very weak and faint.

William is my amanuensis.

I am, &c.

LETTER XXXVII.

FROM THE HON. MR. WILTON TO
MR. BENFIELD.

DEAR SIR,

THE intelligence you have communicated in your last has astonished and alarmed me. Yet, as the delirium has happily subsided, and you have felt no return of the fever, there is a great probability of a fortunate and speedy cure. From your accurate detail of the circumstances, I conclude your wound was received when William, in his fury, struck Lord Wilton over the arm, by which the pistol might be discharged, even involuntarily. Not that I wish to exculpate my father from his unwarrantable rashness, in presenting a loaded pistol to your forehead, being too well acquainted with the impetuosity of his

his passions ; yet this unfortunate accident seems to have been the effect of your valet's courage.

I am puzzled to conceive how my father got intelligence of your elopement. Your total silence on the subject has somewhat amazed me, though I suppose the confusion of your mind, the pain of your wound, and the more acute pain resulting from your disappointment, may have occasioned this forgetfulness. My honoured mother would never have derogated so far from her wonted probity, as to be capable of so flagrant a deception. My sister was unacquainted with your design ; of consequence, she could not discover it. There are only two persons, of whom I can have the least suspicion ; these are, my sister's maid, who was to accompany her, and the good woman in the Wood. However, as the whole transaction seems to be enveloped in a mystery impenetrable, I shall suspend my opinion until I hear farther from you on the subject ; as to hazard a

conjecture on such an uncertainty would be altogether vague and ambiguous.

I had apprized Sir Robert, Lady Bertram, and Olivia, of your intention; and likewise, how you purposed on your return to visit me at my little hermitage. They expressed their satisfaction at the resolution of my sister, and the amiable resignation of my worthy parent. Lady Bertram was quite enraptured with the thought of entertaining the fair runaway for a few days at Bertram-Hall; and said cavalierly, she never would have submitted to have carried her duty so far as to have embittered his days, and destroyed her own happiness, but would have eloped with the man of her heart, supposing her father had followed with a loaded pistol to the foot of the altar: there would she have taken an asylum, and claimed all the sacred privilege of sanctuary. Sir Robert laughed at her Quixotism, whilst Olivia smiled at the romanticness of her declaration. But how were they astonished when

when I informed them of your disaster !
 Consternation appeared on every face, and
 every symptom of surprise and disappointment
 was visibly manifested. Sir Robert
 was remarkably serious, and enquired
 how Lord Wilton had discovered the en-
 terprize. Lady Bertram extolled the cou-
 rage and fidelity of William, and said,
 “ Had not Don Quixote been unfortu-
 “ nately wounded in the beginning of the
 “ battle, he must inevitably have carried
 “ off his charming Dulcinea.” Olivia was
 grave to an extreme :—the pearly drop
 stood glistening in her eye whilst she ex-
 claimed, “ Poor Miss Wilton !”—“ O
 “ right,” exclaimed Lady Bertram, “ you
 “ have not informed us what is become of
 “ the Lady.”—“ Therein, Madam, is my
 “ own perplexity ; for of her destiny I am
 “ totally ignorant. The severity of her
 “ doom, I am afraid, will be lasting and
 “ pungent.”—“ Olivia,” said Lady Ber-
 tram, “ would you suffer with impunity ?”—
 “ I know not, Madam, how I should act, were
 “ I in

“ In Miss Wilton’s case; the dread of mis-
“ fortune is frequently more horrible than
“ the misfortune itself.”—“ Now, Wilton,
“ she is going to philosophize; and were
“ I not to laugh her out of this gravity
“ so often in a day, we should have no-
“ thing but sentiment and religion as our
“ entertainment from morning till night.”
—“ And pray, my Lady,” said Sir Robert,
“ is it not the most elegant and rational
“ entertainment that the human mind can
“ participate of ?”—“ Now Bishop Ber-
“ tram,” replied my Lady, “ is going to
“ sermonize. Pray, Doctor, where is
“ your text ? Olivia, you will say Amen
“ at the conclusion ! I will forfeit my
“ woman’s judgment if Miss Wilton would
“ not prefer her Benfield’s arms to all the
“ sermons that ever Tillotson wrote.”
—“ Come, Olivia,” answered Sir Robert,
“ she is now in her frolicsome mood, and
“ will laugh us out of the most serious
“ subject ; let us recur to the original topic,
“ and bewail the unlucky mishap of the
“ un-

“fortunate lovers.” They lamented your calamity, and wished you a speedy and better success.

Indeed, Benfield, I grieve for your aged father. In the morning, happy in the opinion of seeing you blessed with a virtuous partner; and while he was felicitating himself on your success, to be suddenly surprised with the disastrous spectacle of a bleeding son!—My own honoured parent’s case is truly deplorable; she will suffer under the heavy load of blame and accusation; and although there be no evidence to impeach her innocence, such is the watchful jealousy of my father’s disposition, that he will fabricate a thousand schemes but he will involve her in this supposed criminality.

How are the best of intentions, frequently by the intervention of a single incident, blasted and rendered abortive! My mother, from a well-grounded consciousness of my sister’s unalterable

able attachment and the visible decline of her health, wished to preserve her child, by giving her consent to an union which alone could reward the one and restore the other. Amiable resolution! but how art thou perverted by some secret and unforeseen contingency! Is not this an instructive lesson, and demonstrative of the futility of all our conclusions! You were confident of the certainty of your success; in a few minutes your machinations were defeated, your life in imminent danger, and though the prize of your adventure was offered to your arms, you had not the capability to receive her. So narrow is the path of rectitude, and so short-sighted is the son of frail mortality!

My own narrative, you will recollect, was discontinued after Olivia's and my departure from Mr. Brooke's with an intention of taking a walk in the park. It was almost noon, and the sun was scorching :

we

we took shelter from his meridian rays beneath the cooling shade of a row of very tall pines. The solitary sequestered situation of the place was peculiarly favourable to the soft impulses of the tender passion.—I wished to embrace the present moment, and, prompted by the whispering dictates of my beating heart, took her by the hand, and said, “In-
 “ deed, Olivia, since I had the happiness
 “ to declare my passion, and permission
 “ to tender you my addresses, I have expe-
 “ rienced more real pleasure than I have
 “ enjoyed for some months before; but
 “ may I presume to hope, that you will
 “ confirm this pleasure by an assurance
 “ that you do not receive me with cool-
 “ ness or indifference?”—“If such an
 “ assurance,” answered Olivia, “were
 “ sufficient to establish your present hap-
 “ piness, probably I might not find much
 “ difficulty to give it; but I am young
 “ and inexperienced, almost a stranger to
 “ the bias of my own inclination and the
 “ dictates

“dictates of my heart; therefore, I
 “must hesitate before I come to such a
 “decision, lest I should be precipitated
 “into an egregious error.”—“I applaud
 “your prudence; yet why so cautious?
 “Though our intimacy be of no long
 “duration, yet confide in my honourable
 “declaration when I protest to you, I
 “love you—yes, love you with the ten-
 “derest, the most refined passion that can
 “agitate the mind of an unhappy youth
 “—unhappy beyond expression, if not
 “alleviated by your kindness, and in-
 “formed of his fate:—if rejected, the
 “most miserable wretch who wanders up-
 “on the face of the earth could not equal
 “my torment:—if accepted, I should deem
 “myself infinitely beyond the reach of
 “Fortune’s arrows.”—“Oh! Mr. Wilton,
 “you are far too sanguine. There are few
 “conditions in life either so wretched or
 “so happy, but the former has some in-
 “tervals of mitigation, and the latter
 “some hours of sorrow. Your fate, I
 “hope,

“hope, as to happiness or misery, is not
 “so minutely interwoven with my deter-
 “mination as to be solely dependent up-
 “on it.”—“Solely dependent upon it in-
 “deed, my lovely Olivia! Do not tempo-
 “rize with me—every minute adds to my
 “suspence, and consequently to my mi-
 “sery. Is it not cruel, Olivia, to be
 “treated with indifference by the dear
 “object of all my wishes?”—“If such a
 “confirmation, Sir, will relieve your sus-
 “pence, you are conscious I never re-
 “ceived you with indifference, much less
 “have treated you with cruelty.—No, Mr.
 “Wilton, my partiality, if not manifestly
 “acknowledged, was at least tacitly ad-
 “mitted.”—“Happy moment,” exclaim-
 “ed I, “which has dissipated my suspence,
 “and informed me that I am not indif-
 “ferent to my Olivia!”—Clasping her in
 my arms, in the ardour of my transports
 I dared to impress a kiss upon her lips:—
 she coloured, and the soft suffusion over-
 spread

spread her face, and made her beauty more beautiful.

After a temporary pause, and having somewhat recovered from her confusion, she said, "Mr. Wilton, I wish not to deceive you
 " —the openness of your behaviour should
 " not be returned by the least glimpse of duplicity."—She paused again, and seemed much distressed.—"Proceed, my angel,
 " and doubt not my confidence."—"You
 " may possibly be deceived in relation to
 " my family—I am not the daughter of
 " Sir Robert Bertram."—She sighed, and the tears stole down her lovely cheeks—I kissed them away.—"I had, Mr. Wilton, a father—one of the best of fathers
 " —one whom I never offended—from
 " whose paternal care I expected every
 " indulgence; and though I have long
 " experienced all the love and affection of
 " the tenderest parents in the good Sir
 " Robert Bertram and his worthy Lady,
 " yet believe me when I assure you I am
 " a child of many sorrows."—Here her
 grief

grief stopped her utterance, she laid her head upon my bosom, and wet it with her tears.

I was anxious to hear a further explanation, but so immoderate was her grief, that it would have been an act of cruelty to afflict her more at present by the painful recollection of scenes, the bare mention of which overwhelmed her in a flood of tears.

I led her to a seat which was placed at the distance of a few yards from us; and being seated, I tenderly requested her to moderate her grief, saying, "My dear Olivia, if you have lost a father, I will be a father and a husband to you: you shall pour your sorrows into my bosom, and it shall be my daily study to mitigate and bear an equal share of them." She answered me with sighs. I held her enfolded in my arms—her head was reclined upon my breast—my eyes were riveted upon her face, attentive to every motion. I thought I heard a foot—I looked up—Mr. Fennell was within a few yards

yards of us, walking with a very hasty step. Olivia saw him not until his address aroused her from her momentary trance. "I perceive," said he with a tone of arrogance, "all your walks are solitary. It is not very polite thus abruptly to disturb your silence, but probably hereafter the Lady may thank me."

She arose, and, smiling contempt at the littleness of his sarcasm, replied, "If hereafter I should thank you, it shall be for a discontinuance of that officiousness, which has not hitherto merited my thanks." He affected not to hear her, but, turning and addressing himself to me, said, "Your perseverance in a pursuit where I claim a prior right, is an insult which I am determined not to brook."—I answered, "Mr. Fennell, this point was discussed before to-day, and whatever prior right you claim to this lady (taking her by the hand), I am apt to believe it is ill founded. She denies your right, and her denial ought to be your law;—and therefore

“ therefore know I claim a right, though
 “ a slight one, which I will not relinquish
 “ but by the express and positive com-
 “ mands of the lady herself.”—“ You a
 “ right !” exclaimed he, with fury flash-
 ing from his eyes—his countenance dis-
 torted—and his whole frame trembling
 with the agitations of rage—“ You a right !
 “ This is too insolent, Olivia : such a de-
 “ claration is disparaging to your honour.”
 —“ No, Sir,” answered Olivia, “ but such
 “ behaviour as your’s is disgraceful to good
 “ manners.” He answered not. I deemed
 his arrogance not worthy of rebuke, and
 we walked silently back to Bertram-Hall.

I am, &c.

LETTER

LETTER XXXVIII.

FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME.

DEAR SIR,

I ONLY continued at Bertram-Hall about half an hour; for Olivia, soon after our arrival, retired, and the reserve and fullness of Mr. Fennell threw a shade of disgusting silence over all the parties present: I therefore retired, concluding myself very fortunate, from the knowledge of possessing some share of the affection of my lovely Olivia. It is not long ago since this consideration alone would have made me completely happy; but such is the versatility of the lot of humanity, that we always have some gnawing ingredient in our sublunary enjoyments to embitter our pleasures, and teach us to place no reliance on such transitory objects. Thus, though I conceive

ceive myself happy in the affections of my Olivia, still the recollection of my alienation from my family at Wilton-Park, the unhappiness and misery my precipitate departure hath occasioned, and moreover the supposition of having incurred my father's dreadful imprecation, with this unfortunate adventure of your's, form a hideous combination, which almost destroys every moment of my present peace, and racks me with perpetual inquietudes.

This morning I was waited on by a gentleman whom I had never seen before. As soon as he was introduced, and requested to be seated, he politely said, "Sir, you will probably be surprised at the visit of an utter stranger; but as I come at the particular desire of my friend Mr. Fennell, I hope you will excuse me, though I be necessitated to deliver an unwelcome message."—I replied, "Your politeness, Sir, needs no apology, and whatever message you are deputed to

“ deliver from your friend Mr. Fennell,
“ I am ready to receive.”—He answered,
“ Mr. Fennell is informed that you are
“ become an advocate for the affections of
“ Miss Bertram, to whom he lays a claim
“ in priority of intention, yet wishes to be
“ satisfied from your own explicit declaration,
“ whether his information be true
“ or false, as upon that alone he means to
“ regulate his future conduct towards
“ you.”—“ Sir, I deem Mr. Fennell’s
“ conduct in this affair very indelicate and
“ extraordinary. He certainly has no right
“ whatever to put any such interrogatories
“ to me ; and whilst my behaviour to
“ Mr. Fennell is regulated by propriety
“ and politeness, I do not conceive myself
“ in the least responsible to him for
“ any of my particular actions. As to
“ his allegation of a priority of claim, it
“ is so futile, yet authoritative, that it
“ deserves no serious consideration. I
“ thought it my duty to apply to Sir
“ Robert Bertram, and not to Mr. Fennell,
“ nell,

“nell, for information, who immediately
 “informed me, Olivia had no previous
 “engagement; which was confirmed by
 “the lady’s own asseveration; and, thus
 “circumstanced, I am not certainly ame-
 “nable to any other individual whatever.”
 “—Sir,” returned the stranger, “your ex-
 “plication is honourable and ingenuous;
 “but as I am not commissioned to decide
 “from my own opinion, I hope you will
 “be express and determinate in your an-
 “swer to my first question, Whether or
 “no you have paid your addresses to Miss
 “Bertram?”—“It is certainly altogether
 “optional in me, Sir, whether or no I an-
 “swer this question directly. For Mr.
 “Fennell to assume any authority over
 “my actions, is neither warrantable by
 “civility nor justice. I have with un-
 “ruffled patience borne the coarseness of
 “his insults, and the sneers of his petu-
 “lance; but why I am to be accountable
 “to him for the minutest action of my
 “life, I am totally at a loss to conceive.”—

“Sir,” replied the stranger, “your conception of the propriety of your own conduct may be just and rational; yet as Mr. Fennell views it in a different light, and concludes himself to be materially injured, I hope you can have no objection to give a direct answer to the question proposed, as an evasive one may be construed into duplicity.”—“No, Sir, I neither wish to evade your question, nor be charged with duplicity; I only wish to know, what right Mr. Fennell has to cavil at any of my proceedings?”—“He pleads, Sir, his first proposal ought to have been rejected before you ought to have interposed.”—“I am a perfect stranger, Sir,” to this mercantile dealing. I have informed you already, that Sir Robert Bertram and the lady herself assured me, there was no matrimonial connection upon the tapis between Olivia and Mr. Fennell. This assurance I deemed altogether satisfactory, without appealing

“ing

“ing to Mr. Fennell for his approbation;
 “but as you particularly request my
 “avowal or disavowal, I avert to you, that I
 “have paid my addressee to Miss Bertram,
 “and mean to persevere, whilst the Lady
 “deigns to honour me with her attention.”
 “—This avowal, Sir, you will not retract?”
 “—Not in the least, Sir.”—“Are you dis-
 “posed to discontinue your addressee until
 “Mr. Fennell receives a final rejection?”
 “From the honourable assurance I have had,
 “Sir, Mr. Fennell’s proposals were
 “—yes, therefore, under this impres-
 “sion, I am determined to persevere
 “without any retraction.”—“I am for-
 “ry, Sir, for your resolution, since it
 “reduces me to the disagreeable ne-
 “cessity of delivering to you the final
 “requisition of my friend. The con-
 “tents of this letter will convince you
 “of his ultimate determination. The
 “time and place I have full power to
 “settle with you.”—Here he gave me
 the following letter :

TO MR. WILTON.

SIR,

ALTHOUGH you were sufficiently apprized of my attachment to Miss Bertram, yet you have interposed, with a view to frustrate my intentions, and disappoint me in my well-grounded hopes of success; and as I am determined not to relinquish my pursuit, nor tacitly submit to ~~any~~ ^{any} ~~insulting~~ interference, I insist upon the satisfaction of a gentleman. ~~Mr. Colton~~, who has the honour to deliver this to you, will settle every particular relative to the business. Your determination of time and place will be accepted, and whatever resolutions may be agreed upon between Mr. Colton and you will be punctually adhered to. I shall wait with the utmost patience for your ultimate decision; which intimated the sooner, will be the more agreeable to

J. FENNELL.

"So,

“ So, Mr. Colton, I perceive your
“ friend has given you an ample com-
“ mission in this very honourable business,
“ which I have always concluded to be
“ disgraceful to humanity.”—“ You must
“ acknowledge, Mr. Wilton, that it is
“ the only appeal which a gentleman can
“ have recourse to.”—“ Not at all, Sir,
“ the acknowledgement would be irrational
“ and injudicious. The supposition of
“ an offence, or even the actual commis-
“ sion, might certainly be terminated
“ much more amicably than having re-
“ course to that infernal method by which
“ the existence of a fellow-creature might
“ be destroyed.”—“ Custom, Mr. Wilton,
“ is an all-powerful agent ; and whatever
“ method she has given her sanction to,
“ it behoves us to give our acquiescence,
“ lest we should be stigmatized with the
“ opprobrium of singularity. The im-
“ plicit admission of your maxim, Mr.
“ Colton, would overturn every establish-
“ ment of religion and morality, and
K 4 “ equally

"equally militate against every laudable
 "institution which may have been erected
 "upon the ruin of some exploded custom.
 "Whatever is evil, although sanctioned
 "by the revered appellation of Custom,
 "cannot be too soon exploded."—"As you
 "and I, Mr. Wilton, totally disagree in
 "our opinions on this point, and as the
 "present business is not likely to be ter-
 "minated by any of our casuistical di-
 "stinctions, may I beg to know your de-
 "terminations upon the subject, and when
 "and where you wish to terminate the
 "dispute?"—"Mr. Colton, I am not so
 "precipitate as to come to an immediate
 "conclusion on so important an affair,
 "where my life and character are con-
 "cerned; but you may rest assured, that
 "I will not shrink from the defence of
 "my avowal, nor crouch beneath the
 "odious epithet of coward. In a few
 "days Mr. Fennell may expect my final
 "determination."

has Mr.
 village "

Mr. Colton politely apologized for the trouble he had given me, and, as he retired, reminded me of punctuality, as Mr. Fennell's impatience would not brook delay. I told him, Mr. Fennell's impatience must wait for my consideration. He bowed and departed.

He was no sooner gone, and the door shut, than I reflected upon this extraordinary politeness of a man who can settle a deliberate scene of murder with as much coolness and precision as though he were settling the etiquette of a ball or a masquerade.

I always thought death to be a very serious subject, and deserving of the maturest consideration; yet Mr. Colton could wish to adjust the preliminaries, probably for the destruction of his friend, with as much unconcern and sedateness as if he were only a distant spectator, or an inattentive hearer. Strange infatuation! that a man who dignifies another by the hallowed name of friend, would in

the least be instrumental in forging the means to destroy his existence; or even be an accessory to his friend, when he wished to imbrue his hands in the blood of his fellow-creature, merely to gratify the violence of an ill-governed passion.

I seriously debated with myself how I should behave on this important crisis; and frequently, Benfield, did I wish for your presence, when your counsel might have advised me how to act in so critical a conjuncture. You foresaw the event, and proffered your assistance; but an evil destiny has ultimately prevented me from soliciting and you from complying with my wishes.

To shrink from his challenge, and be branded with the opprobrious appellation of coward, is what my native sense of honour recoils at; yet the opinion I have formed of right and wrong, of religion and virtue, strongly militates against my acceptance of his challenge. I am at present too much perturbed to come to any final
con-

conclusion, further than that I am resolved to acquaint Sir Robert and the worthy Mr. Brooke with the business, whose determinations may prove of signal use, either to extricate me from the rashness of this adventure, or confirm my resolution to rush further into it. O Benfield! I feel I want your assistance : why are you at this time incapable !

I am, &c.

K 6

LET-

LETTER XXXIX:

FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME.

DEAR SIR,

SOON after I had dined I went to Bertram-Hall, with the intention of consulting Sir Robert, whom I found very cheerful, engaged in a friendly conversation with his Lady and Olivia. As soon as I entered, Lady Bertram said, "I am glad, Mr. Wilton, you are come ;

" for we are scarcely recovered from a fit

" of the vapours, which the fullness of

" Mr. Fennell occasioned amongst us last

" night. It was fortunate he retired so

" early ; for his gloominess and reserve

" have of late become intolerable. I

" heartily wish he were perched upon the

" highest peak of Cheviot-hills, where

" the thin chill atmosphere would proba-

" bly

“bly evaporate all his phlegmatic surly
“humours. What say you, Olivia? will
“you give your consent to have him
“placed so high?”—“It is immaterial
“to me, Madam, how high he be
“placed, if he be only at a sufficient dis-
“tance from me, and in no very immi-
“nent danger.”—“So, so, Olivia, with
“all your squeamishness, you would not
“have him placed in a dangerous situa-
“tion! Any person, I thought, whom we
“viewed with an eye of cool indifference,
“might be placed in the most hazardous
“situation, without exciting a single sigh
“for his preservation.”—“Pardon me,
“Lady Bertram, I could not see my
“enemy suffer from an impending dan-
“ger, without apprizing him of it. This
“is a duty we owe to every being of the
“human species.”—“Come, come, Oli-
“via, I believe you will fall in love with
“Mr. Fennell after all, and then Mr.
“Wilton will inevitably suffer an irrepa-
“rable loss. Pray, Sir Robert, what is
“this

“ this you are poring over with a face as
 “ grave as an owl ?”—Here she snatched
 Mr. Fennell’s letter out of his hands,
 which I had given him to peruse du-
 ring the preceding conversation.—“ Mer-
 “ ciful heaven ! what is this, Mr. Wil-
 “ ton ? A challenge, and from Mr. Fen-
 “ nell ! Pretty work, Olivia ! Here
 “ Mr. Fennell wishes to blow Mr. Wil-
 “ ton’s brains out, because you are so ob-
 “ stinate as not to marry him against your
 “ inclination !” At the first part of this
 exclamation Olivia looked surprized ;
 but no sooner did she hear the word
 Challenge pronounced than she turned
 pale as death—her eyes gradually closed :
 —she held a newspaper in her hand—it
 dropped—I sprang to her chair, and
 caught the lovely creature as she was
 falling in a swoon upon the floor. “ What
 “ indiscretion !” said Sir Robert.—“ In-
 “ deed, I was not aware of the conse-
 “ quences, Sir Robert, otherwise I should
 “ not have acted so.”—“ Apply your saks,
 “ my

“ my dear, apologize for your rashness,
“ and deny every syllable, as a piece of
“ harmless merriment.”—“ I am all obe-
“ dience, Sir Robert.—She recovers!—Mr.
“ Wilton, conceal that tremendous letter.
“ My dear Olivia, why are you so terri-
“ fied at a little harmless mirth?”—“ I am
“ not well, Madam ; I beg leave to re-
“ tire.”—Lady Bertram led her out, pale,
faint, and trembling.

I then observed to Sir Robert, that “ I was
“ sorry for my own inconsideration in pro-
“ ducing the letter; but as I had not the least
“ intention of discovering its contents to
“ the ladies, so I thought there was no
“ hazard of their enquiry.”—“ The dis-
“ covery has alarmed Olivia—yes, Mr.
“ Wilton, an alarm which will probably
“ give you pleasure, as it has betrayed
“ the tender sensations of a heart too sus-
“ ceptible of every delicate feeling.”—“ I
“ shall certainly, Sir Robert, deem myself
“ happy in the envied partiality of my
“ dear Olivia ; but you perceive by what
“ a service

“a service I am to merit her.”—“Pray,
“Mr. Wilton, when did you receive this
“letter?”—“This morning, Sir.”—“It
“is no more than I expected; but what
“answer did you return?”—“I returned a
“verbal answer by Mr. Colton, that in
“the space of a few days Mr. Fennell
“should hear of my determination.”—
“What is your determination, Mr. Wil-
“ton?”—“To accept his challenge, Sir
“Robert.”—“I see no alternative, Mr.
“Wilton, since you are called upon as a
“gentleman, and a man of honour. To
“decline the meeting would give him a
“specious cause for exultation and tri-
“umph, when your character would lie
“under the ignominious reproach of cow-
“ardice; a stigma not to be endured in
“the present day, when all honour is
“supposed to be suspended upon the cock
“of a pistol, or the point of a sword.
“Though I severely condemn the bruta-
“lity of the practice, and could wish to
“see it eternally exploded, yet that
“sovereign

"sovereign tyrant Custom has stamped
 "it with an irreverfible fanktion; fo that
 "a fingle individual has nothing more to
 "do than to comply with the prefent
 "emergency. And pray, when do you
 "mean to acquaint Mr. Fennell with
 "your purpofe?" — "This evening,
 "Sir, and meet him to-morrow." —
 "Mr. Wilton, though young, you have
 "not been too precipitate. I commend your
 "caution. The barbarity of the action
 "may be thought a fufficient excufe for
 "non-compliance; yet, when an honour-
 "able character is to be fupported in the
 "world unspotted and unimpeached, we
 "muft, though unwilling, coincide with
 "that mode which is the moft prevalent,
 "though not the moft laudable." — I re-
 "plied, "As my determination is fixed, Sir
 "Robert, can you fupply me with thofe
 "instruments of death which are requi-
 "fite upon this occafion?" — "My pistols,
 "Mr. Wilton, are in good order — my
 "fword has not been drawn for fome
 "years —

“ years—we will immediately examine
 “ it.” We walked into the Study—the
 pistols were produced, and deemed fit for
 present use. The sword was drawn—
 it glittered in the rays of the sun, and
 seemed very well calculated for the dismal
 work of death. After a cursory examina-
 tion, I placed them upon the table, say-
 ing, “ Whatever destiny awaits my use of
 “ you, ye innocent instruments, I mean
 “ to put it to the trial—the prize is worth
 “ the struggle—and if I fall, I shall not
 “ live to lament my loss.”—“ But, Mr.
 “ Wilton, there is one very material article
 “ still wanting ”—“ What is that, Sir Ro-
 “ bert ? ”—“ A second, Sir.”—“ I must
 “ endeavour to stand alone, Sir Robert,
 “ as there is not a gentleman in the
 “ North whom I have the least acquaint-
 “ ance with except yourself and Mr.
 “ Brooke, neither of whom I can with
 “ propriety solicit to undertake so dis-
 “ agreeable an office.”—“ Why am I,
 “ Mr. Wilton, deemed unworthy of the
 “ office ? ”

“office?”—“You misconceive me, Sir Robert. From your long acquaintance with Mr. Fennell, and the near relation you bear to Olivia, I deemed it improper to solicit the favour of your attendance.”—“There is no impropriety in it, Mr. Wilton, and I voluntarily offer to accompany you.”—“You confer an obligation on me which, if I live, I live to acknowledge. Can those instruments of destruction be secretly conveyed to my lodgings this evening?”—“I leave that to my care.”—“I need not, Sir Robert, caution you to secrecy.—For Olivia! I have probably seen her for the last time!”

I left Sir Robert and went to the Vicarage, to enquire after the health of my pretty cowslip gatherer. I was happy to find the little cherub so much relieved from the baleful influence of the fever, as to be able to sit up and play with his elder brother. I congratulated Mr. Brooke upon his speedy recovery, who seemed to

express his joy on the fortunate event, by a cheerful and constant attendance on the wants of the little invalid. I took him in my arms, kissed him, and asked him if he would talk a walk into the fields along with me. He answered, "Yes," whilst a placid smile gleamed upon his pale and languid countenance. He cast his arms around my neck, saying, "Come, go, go."—I perceived I had acted wrong, by instilling such an idea, when it was improper to indulge him in the innocent simplicity of his wish. When I framed an excuse, he seemed discontented, held out his arms to his father, and left me in disgust.

I observed to Mr. Brooke, that it was certainly a folly in parents or guardians of children to feed their eager fancies with promises which are not, or are never intended to be performed. This single instance was demonstrative how eagerly the infant mind embraced the idea of pleasure, resulting from a careless promise,

nise, which, when not fulfilled according to expectation, that innocent confidence is destroyed, on which a mind unaccustomed to the deceits of life places its sole reliance. Another similar promise is not depended on; hence diffidence and distrust arise, and the child is taught, by methods in which he perceives his parents to indulge themselves, slowly, but methodically, the baleful art of falsifying.

“Your observations, Mr. Wilton, are
 “just and pertinent. Experience has
 “taught me, that we ought never to pro-
 “mise even the most trivial gratification
 “to the infant mind, without an actual
 “performance. The child, much sooner
 “than many people imagine, begins to re-
 “flect, compare, and conclude; and when
 “he finds himself deceived by a parent,
 “whom he is taught to reverence and
 “esteem, he readily concludes, there can
 “be no harm in a practice which his pa-
 “rent has inculcated. Hence, I believe,
 “originates that shameful custom of lying,
 “so

“so frequent among children; they are
 “taught it very early, whilst a natural
 “bias and evil propensity are concluded
 “to be the primitive sources. We stig-
 “matize nature for a crime which our
 “own folly instils and supports.”

Being pleased with the spirit of this agreeable conversation, I had almost forgot the dreadful business I had promised to determine in the evening. I left the Vicarage with precipitation, and retired to my chamber. Having wrote the following answer to Mr. Fennell, and being somewhat composed after I had dispatched it, in case of an unfortunate event, I wrote an affectionate apology to my father, another to my honoured mother, a letter to each of my sisters, and one to you, not to be delivered until the heart which dictated and the pulse of the hand which wrote them had ceased to beat. Lastly, I wrote to my beloved Olivia. As I was concluding this last, a parcel was brought to me from Sir Robert Bertram, wrapped up very carefully.

carefully. I laid the destructive engines on my table, and calmly smiled at the folly of mankind, who could use them as the final arbitrators of the most trifling dispute. I was in a disposition to moralize, but cared not to indulge myself on so melancholy a subject, and therefore prepared to go to rest. Probably before you receive this the hand which wrote it will be cold and motionless.

TO JOHN FENNELL, ESQ.

SIR,

IN answer to your requisition, I suppose Mr. Colton has informed you of my positive avowal of my affection for Miss Bertram. You call upon me for another decision than the lady's will. I hope you will meet me to-morrow evening precisely at six o'clock, at the west side of Bertram Park, where our difference may be finally determined. Sir Robert
Bertram

Betram will accompany me. Sir Robert and your friend shall adjust every necessary preliminary, that at the appointed hour no disagreement may prevent our important purpose.

I am, Sir,

H. WILTON.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.



